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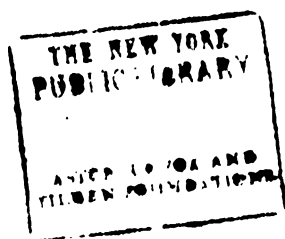
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Longworth







A YEAR

AMONG

THE CIRCASSIANS.

BY

J. A. LONGWORTH, ESQ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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A YEAR

AMONG

THE CIRCASSIANS.

CHAPTER I.

A Circassian Mansion—Funeral Ceremonies—Marriage Feast—Administration of Justice—Circassian Horsemanship—Appearance of a Russian brig off the coast.

As the reader will perhaps be curious to know something of the domestic arrangements of our establishment, I shall endeavour to convey to him some idea of them. The guest-house, with an enclosed grass-plot before, was on the bank of a rivulet—the tribute of our glen to the main stream of Semez. On the declivity of the further bank

partially screened by the foliage, was the farm-yard, with its various tenements, folds, barns, out-houses, &c., for the serfs and cattle. This was the domain of Murtaza, the cowherd, Keri Oglu's chief manager—himself a serf, yet thriving and respected ; for among the live stock that enriched the rural menagerie, were a number of blooming, healthful little vagabonds, in whom, ragged as they were—rolling in the dust or “ paddling in the burn,”—imagination could already see the three-tailed Pashas of the Asiatic province, or the future *deliciæ* of the Turkish harem.

Separated by the pathway, and on the slope of the hill to our left, was the harem and its dependencies, over which, with a sway still more absolute, ruled the Khanoum of our host. I own that such authority will appear inconsistent, after what I have said of female subjection in Circassia. Nature, however, will assert her rights all the world over ; and between a woman in the mid-summer of her charms like the Khanoum, and the personification of winter in the venerable Shamiz, the balance of power established by custom between the sexes was naturally a good deal disturbed. Her administration of the household was rigorous and thrifty in the extreme ; and Shamiz, whose wisdom it was that directed the councils of Natukoitch and Shapsook, played, if

the truth must be told, a very secondary part in his household.

With respect to ourselves, our hostess was everything that is kind and amiable ; and though till the day of my departure I never had a personal interview with her—for she was a strict Mahometan—yet did her unceasing attention display itself in all that could contribute to our comfort. Her superiority as a housewife, not to mention

“ All the savoury country messes
Which the neat hand Phillis dresses,”

was visible to us, like the good offices of some invisible fairy, during our stay.

The family of our host was small. His eldest son had been killed in a battle that was fought near Anapa two years before. He had now only two boys, the one in his eleventh, and the other in his fifteenth year. The visit of the English beyzades had attracted them to Semez, otherwise they were seldom to be found there. Their regular domicile was the house of their foster-father, or ataluk ; but being each of them provided with a horse, it mattered little where they went—every house in the Caucasus was alike open to them as their own. Boys of that age commonly attach themselves, during a jour-

ney or campaign, to a Bey or Ouzden, in the quality of page. They take charge of his horse when he alights, and attend upon his person. Nor is this service degrading, but, on the contrary, honourable to them. Sheretluk and Nogai were the names of our youthful squires.

Two hundred yards further up the glen was the house of Schimaf Bey, Prince of Semez. He had the year before occupied a house in the centre of the valley, but it had been burnt to the ground by Williamanoff's army. But though he continued to keep up his enclosures, and to cultivate the fields there, he had removed his household, at the invitation of Shamiz, to his neighbourhood. His rank of Pshee, or Prince, inferred of itself neither power nor privilege. His father, who was a man of a different stamp, had exercised a great authority over the whole valley, whose inhabitants, though freemen, had been in some sort his vassals. Of such authority I never had a clear definition; the quantity of tribute or service it procures him depends altogether on the individual himself: and while, with his father, whom nobody cared to offend, it was almost paramount, it had, in the hands of Schimaf, shrunk into a barren title and the control of his own immediate serfs. The only persons from whom he ventured to exact anything were Ar-

menians ; and even these, pigeon-hearted as they usually were, would, when emboldened by the protection of another chief, set him completely at defiance. In short, Schimaf, having none of the qualities that command respect, destitute alike of energy and generosity, had sunk into insignificance. From the assiduous court he paid, we at first imagined him to be sincerely attached to us. To compare great things to small, the prince in this respect greatly resembled one of the canine species of the spaniel breed. He followed us wherever we went, and where we took up our abode stretched himself lazily by our couch. He watched our every look and motion, prepared, as I afterwards found, to snap up every inconsiderate trifle we had to spare. Among other articles, he had taken a decided fancy to my watch ; and so often had I to open it for his inspection, and so deep an interest he took in its movements, that I was eventually compelled to surrender it to him. The servants of the prince had not failed to profit by so illustrious an example. They seemed to enjoy the *dolce far niente* quite as much as their master. Their only occupations, as far as I could see, were racing, wrestling, pitching huge stones, and sleeping under the hedges. In any other country, it would have been a matter of surprise how they were clothed and fed, for their

master allowed them no wages. And even here their prowling habits were such as to be regarded with suspicion ; and whenever a theft occurred in the valley of Semez, the prince and his followers were the first to get the credit for it.

There was but one house more in this dell, and it was at some distance higher up. It had a garden with mulberry trees, and was occupied by a goatherd, who seemed well to do in the world. He also was a constant visiter, and apparently a great politician—certainly a great alarmist, since hardly a day passed that he did not present himself with his mouth wide open, and a whole budget of intelligence with respect to the movements and designs of the Russians, which, since our arrival there, he was firmly persuaded would all be directed upon Semez, and more particularly on our glen. He had one consolation under the circumstances, and that was, the very secure retreat it afforded in case of an attack in front. Beyond the house of the goatherd, it contracted into a sort of wild gulley, or chasm, with the woods closing over it on either side, a cover from which, it was easy to see, the Russians would feel little disposition to unearth the Circassians. The disposal of our time during our stay here was somewhat monotonous. We rose with the sun, for the concourse of visitors forming our levee

was such as to prevent our sleeping longer, had we been disposed. The greatest inconvenience we experienced, and one which distinguished guests must submit to, was the public way in which we lived : privacy of any sort was out of the question. I therefore preferred making my toilet in the brake behind the house, which was very commodious for that purpose.

It consists of wild fruit trees, crab, plum, &c., round the stem of which the wild vines wreathing themselves flung their pendent leaves and branches over every aperture, so as to form a very complete roof to my sylvan chamber, while the water that ran through it supplied me with a bath. The heat of the day was passed in reading and receiving visits ; after dinner we took our ride or walk, sometimes to the beach, at others to the old castle or the forest, so that I flatter myself we acquired a pretty accurate idea of the topography of the valley before we left it. In the evening we had tea or coffee ; and when our stock of these articles was exhausted, we found substitutes in the tchickory plant, and a sort of mint made use of by the Circassians. The one, I admit, was rather nauseous, and the other insipid, but it was something still to see our kettle boil.

The time we found most agreeable was between nightfall and the evening repast. Reposing on

either side of the blazing hearth, we listened to the legendary lore of our venerable host. His household on these occasions formed a respectful and attentive auditory, standing (for before supper they were not permitted to sit down) in the lower part of the room. The relations of master and servant are here, as in most other parts of the East, of a primitive and affectionate character, so different from the adventitious ones that connect the mere hireling with his employer. The servants of Shamiz, to use a common expression here, "never departed from his word;" that is to say, it was the law and the prophets to them; their faith in their domestic oracle was unbounded. The stories he recounted of his wars and travels, were highly entertaining and often marvellous. Those which related to his Circassian campaigns interested me the most—and even through the imperfect medium of a translation, I could see he was gifted with no ordinary powers of eloquence and description. The following are imperfect sketches of some of his legends.

The tempest of Russian warfare had not yet burst over these devoted valleys. It then only raged in the Cabardas, great and little, and the chivalrous race who dwell by the tributary waters of the Terek, still made head against the formidable power, whose rapid growth and unfailing

resources were to them matters as much of astonishment as of distress. It was during this protracted struggle, which lasted with slight intermission upwards of twenty years, that our host and other adventurous spirits, gathered from the remotest parts of the Caucasus, had contributed by their valour to retard the progress of the invader. Exhausted, at length, by a conflict which threatened them with extermination, the majority of the people entered into a sort of capitulation, under which, though allowed to retain their arms and to be governed by their own chiefs, they were compelled to give hostages, and to assist in the pacification of their neighbours. There were many, however, who sternly rejected these conditions, and retreating into Caratchai and the wildest regions of Elborouz, still bade defiance to the Muscovite. Descending from the mountains, they not only made forays into the Russian territory, but visited with the severest retribution those who had been induced to capitulate. To punish these desperate men, the Russians, led by Cabardian guides, at length undertook an incursion into Caratchai; but they found to their cost that nature herself was there in arms against them; her rocks, glaciers, and forests, afforded no theatre for war to display its art upon; amidst

lier more stupendous magnificence, "its pride, pomp, and circumstance" dwindled into nothing; and the army, consisting of more than ten thousand men, which scaled Elborouz in pursuit of the Circassians, was compared by Shamiz, as he disdainfully recalled its appearance to mind, to a caterpillar on the trunk of the forest oak.

The expedition was a fatal one: they succeeded in burning some of their hamlets, but the Circassians themselves, though ever at hand, could not be overtaken. After a bootless chase of several weeks, and leaving more than half their number a prey to the vultures of Elborouz, they once more made their appearance, haggard as their ghosts, on the plains of the Terek. Such a contest has a tendency to quench every spark of humanity: with men who prefer death, or worse than death, to bondage, whose habitations have been repeatedly fired, and themselves hunted from their inheritance, the voice of humanity, that of interest itself, is drowned in the cries of vengeance. The prisoners, whose sale or ransom is so lucrative all over the Caucasus, in this campaign found no mercy—the stragglers, who fell into the hands of the Circassians, were all put to the sword. The Russians retaliated, and, as we were told, even burnt some of their captives over a slow fire.

The ingenuity of their enemies was taxed to requite them, and the torture inflicted on some of these wretches was fantastic as it was terrible. They were taken to the Russian frontier—and as they had left their own homes to burn those of the Circassians, they were sent back again bound hand and foot to their horses, with a lighted bundle of straw to speed them over the steppes at their cruppers.

Among other exploits, Shamiz had once headed an assault upon Soukouin Kalè. To protect his men in their approaches, he had invented a sort of moveable fascine, of cylindrical shape, and filled with earth. These were rolled towards the fortress, while those that propelled them flattered themselves that they might safely advance under their cover to the walls. But the batteries which opened upon them as they drew near soon convinced them of their error. Their machines were pounded about their ears with such vigour and despatch, that they were themselves reduced to a nonplus, and compelled to seek their safety in a precipitate flight. This invention of Shamiz was crowned with no better success than his subsequent one of wooden cannons, which, however ingenious in theory, proved in execution more fatal to his friends than his enemies.

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In such conversations we spent our evenings ; and about three hours after sunset the doors of our apartment would fly open, while the crowd in the lower part of it made way for a train of tables and dishes, preceded by ewer, basin, and napkin, for supper. The staple of it was beef, mutton, or goat's flesh, for everything is consumed as fast as it is slaughtered, and our servants and neighbours helped us through with an entire sheep, to say nothing of poultry, pastry, &c., every day. Such profusion in feasting had not been seen in the country since the visit of Hassan Pacha, who, as we were *naïvely* informed, had, while presents lasted, been treated with the greatest consideration, but on the failure of these, having subsequently sunk very much in popularity, he received the by no means flattering surname of *Turk Hassan*.

A ceremony always observed during these repasts is the careful inspection of the mutton shoulder blades, the transparent part of which, or the *scapula*, is held up to the light, and, according to the marks or stains it presents, held to be of good or evil augury. The same superstition prevails in Greece, and I believe throughout the Levant. The gravity with which these bones are handed about to the guests, or passed to some wrinkled and spectacled seer, who is supposed to

be wiser than the rest, and who pores on it as though the fate of the country depended on its contents, is truly admirable. The more pious Mussulmans, however, though listening to it very attentively I thought, affect a contempt for this sort of soothsaying, and style the bones, in derision, Abassá Kitab, or the Abasian Koran. But the general faith in them is very strong; so much so, that I believe what is predicted from them is frequently assumed as matter of fact and history, and reported accordingly. Hence the quantity of false news in circulation, and hence the positive announcement we so often heard of the arrival of our fleet in the Black Sea.

All these falsehoods might be safely charged to the mutton bones, which here, as in Greece, were not merely the organs of divination, but appropriate substitutes for those of the press. Such at least was the opinion of Mavrocordato, who sent from Missolonghi to a correspondent who had written to him for news, a string of the bones in question, adding, "There is a file of our newspapers."

One evening, returning from our ride, we were not a little alarmed by the shrieks and wailing that issued from the harem; and, on inquiry, we learned that a messenger had arrived from the south with the afflicting intelligence of the loss

of our hostess's three brothers, who had fallen while bravely opposing the debarkation of the Russian troops at Ardiler. We now learned that the operations of this campaign were not confined to the north, but that another army, under General Rosen, was co-operating with that of Williamanoff, by a simultaneous attack from the direction of Soukouin Kalè, and that having failed in forcing its way through the defiles, it had next attempted a descent on the coast at Ardiler. Fifty vessels, including a steamer and transports, had suddenly stood into the bay, and upwards of a hundred boats having been lowered and manned, made directly for the beach. To prevent their landing, only sixty warriors, all nobles, we were told, could for some time be mustered; but this little band of resolute addressed itself with such gallantry to the task, keeping up a well-directed fire on the boats as they approached, and sallying sword in hand from their trenches on the soldiers before they could form on the beach, that notwithstanding the murderous broadsides of the ships of war poured as usual on Russians and Circassians indiscriminately, the former could obtain no footing. The neighbourhood had in the mean time rallied, and, animated by the example of the heroic handful who had nobly kept the Russians

at bay till their arrival, the people of Ardiler, for that time at least, effectually prevented the debarkation. Later in the season the attempt was renewed with better result, and Rosen succeeded in landing his troops and constructing a fort.

Here, as well as elsewhere, the system, or rather the absence of system, that characterises Circassian warfare, became sufficiently manifest. The only rule they observe in the event of an invasion, is to gather as quickly as possible at the report of the first gun; all who hear it obey this summons immediately. But the obligation of defence only extends to the inhabitants of the threatened district, to whom, in ordinary cases, it would be an insult to suppose that they were not ready and able to provide for it. Where there are standing armies, and arms form a profession apart, the idea of a portion of the community being engaged to protect the rest is one to which we have long been familiar: but an armed population is not so easily reconciled to the custom of paying others to fight its battles; and hence it is that while every individual of it prides himself on his personal prowess and his martial accomplishments, discipline and combination are altogether unknown. The habits and feelings engendered in such a country are not easily eradicated. In removing from it they have been transplanted to

the soil of Egypt, and the same insubordination, the same personal advantage, formerly distinguished the Mamelukes, while the "mettle of their original pastures" no less displayed itself in headlong and fiery onset, to be quelled only in their own or their enemies' blood. Out of the sixty who opposed the landing of the Russians at Ardiler, forty were killed and the rest severely wounded. Among the former, as I have already stated, were the three brothers of our hostess.

The cries of the poor woman, refusing apparently to be comforted, at this fearful havoc of her race, were truly heart-rending; but when I was given to understand that these vivid demonstrations of grief were prescribed by custom, which required their continuance for the space of two hours, and when the gossips of the Khanoum, who had visited her on the occasion, instead of endeavouring to console her, played their part as chorus, and "yelled forth like syllables of *dolour*," I must confess my sympathy was not quite so keen. Still the effect of the funeral cry, heard amidst the woods and wilds of Circassia, has a thrilling solemnity, which none who have listened to it can ever forget. The other observances by which custom, the only tyrant here, seeks to regulate the emotions of sorrow, according to the sex or station of the mourner, border,

I am afraid, on the ludicrous : for while an Ouzden is only expected to look very dismal and touch his beard, the grief of a Tocar is to know no bounds ; he is to beat his head with his whip, thump his breast, throw himself on the couch, blubber, groan, and sob with great perseverance, till two of the inmates of the house seizing him by the arms, put a period to his sorrows by thrusting him out of doors. In former times it was the custom to bury the dead with their arms and accoutrements ; but the modern Circassians, wiser in their generation, seem to think the defunct will be equally satisfied by being decorated with them previously, and then buried without them.

In the evening, Shamiz, in alluding to this domestic calamity, bitterly inveighed against the Russians, whose ambition caused the desolation of so many families, and on our endeavouring to comfort him by the remark that they had been amply avenged by the wholesale slaughter of their enemies, he indignantly exclaimed, "Think you that the blood of a single Ouzden can be atoned for by that of a whole herd of swine like the Muscovites?"

A wealthy merchant of Semez, named Hassim, having purchased a wife for one of his household slaves, we were invited to grace the

nuptials by our presence. His house was in a dell, situated on the same side of the valley as our own, and separated by three or four others, the silence of which in traversing them on our road was broken only by the woodland melody. But the merry and monotonous notes of the mountain pipe, and the festive murmur of the multitude, prepared us, as we ascended the height above it, for the scene of simple revelry—a scene of the olden time, enfolded in its windings.

The walls of a palace excluding all but the *élite* of Almack's or the *crème* of Vienna, contain more of taste and grandeur, but certainly less of real enjoyment. The spirit of hospitality that presides at these festivals, is neither selfish nor exclusive; free, hearty, and sociable, unconfined, and open as the day, its pleasures are accessible to all; its halls, such as nature herself has unlocked for them in the mountains, and when these are not large enough for the feast, the heath or the mountain itself affords room for its celebration. On the present occasion the party being small, it was entertained in the shelter of Hus-sim's snug little valley, into which, as we arrived, the good folks of Semez were pouring amain from every quarter.

Their notions of splendour, as exhibited in the holiday finery of the beaus and belles, were cer-

tainly not very extravagant. Some of our Dely-Canns might carry their heads an inch or two higher than the others, on the strength of new morocco shoes, silk anteri, or a superfluous depth of silver lace in the border, while some of the beauties might be no less elate, conscious of wearing, in addition to the silver studs, stomacher, and clasps, which in their day had also decorated their grandmothers, a new brooch or kerchief, or as a substitute, a long piece of white calico, sweeping in ample folds from their hair down to their heels; yet, notwithstanding these, and other similar tokens of a taste somewhat ambitious, the costumes were on the whole rather homely than brilliant. In some instances, so far from being provided with wedding garments, the apparel of the guests (for all the world was welcome) was even considerably the worse for wear, both as regards the upper and nether integuments; nay, in some instances I was led, by the careful adjustment of the former, to speculate (but too justly I fear) on the total absence of the latter. These persons, however, if such there were, kept very prudently in the back ground, and looked picturesquely enough as half-lengths among the bushes. All were in high spirits, though their mirth was neither

low nor vulgar. A Circassian rarely indulges in levity, or forgets his habitual good-breeding.

The sky was clear and unclouded, but the heat of the day was tempered by the sea-breeze, (the sweet south, as the poet sings,) which, in addition to its usual burthen from the violet beds, was now fraught with a savoury steam infinitely more grateful to the nostrils of the whole party, as indicative of the good cheer in preparation—tidings, which a glance towards the interior of the glen served decidedly to confirm, for there, in the neighbourhood of the thickly embowered cottages of our host, might be discovered more than one blazing fire; over every fire a tripod of stakes, and depending from each of these, a noble-charged spit or kettle; while, to complete the gypsy-like appearance of the scene, a number of old ladies in feridges might be seen busying themselves about these preparations with the most laudable activity.

The bottom of the glen had been abandoned to the revels, the old folks, among whom we took our seats on our mats and cushions, looking on from the shaded declivities on either side. The women, old and young, all flocked together; and when the dancing commenced, the veiled mother led forth the unveiled daughter, stately as an

antelope, and in public, looking almost as timid, to secure her a place among the dancers. There, literally jammed between two of the rougher sex, for much of the spirit of the thing consists in squeezing them almost to suffocation, the fair creatures went languidly or were carried, rather, round with the circle, whose movements consisted more of a certain undulation of the body than any extraordinary exertion of the legs. Some of the young men, however, hopped very vigorously, and the whole party revolved round and round to the sprightly music of their unwearied minstrel, looking as grave all the while as judges, or the council-ring itself.

Semez has not much to boast of in the way of beauty, and the decidedly pretty girls to be seen in the circle were exceptions to the general rule. They were all fair, nevertheless; their eyes rivalled the azure of the noon-day sky above them, and their tresses, though in some cases too fiery, its golden hues at sunset.

In the midst of this revelry, an incident occurred by which it was somewhat rudely interrupted. Among the most conspicuous individuals in the circle of dancers, was a young fellow with a calpac of long goatskin, capering, frisking, and leering right and left on his fair neighbours with the look of a satyr. He had not perceived, during

his antics, another person who had come suddenly behind him, as seemingly with no very friendly intentions. Though a grey-bearded elder, his ruddy cheeks and muscular frame betokened great strength; as the hazel-stick in his hand, freshly peeled, and such as (an Irishman would say) "springs pleasantly off a man's head," denoted his intention of giving us a proof of it. A single blow of this formidable weapon levelled the luckless wight in his glory to the earth, and put a temporary stop to the festivities of the day. One party had surrounded the assailant, who, with flushed countenance, flashing eyes, and flourished cudgel, was with difficulty restrained from inflicting further chastisement on his fallen adversary. He, on the other hand, lay extended on the greensward. His thick calpac had afforded no protection to his crown, which was bleeding profusely, and he was carried away stunned and insensible to the adjacent cottages.

Mr. Bell, justly incensed at this outrage, demanded an immediate explanation—declaring for us both, that unless the offender was punished we should withdraw forthwith from the assembly. But the elders, who expressed great concern for what had happened, proved nevertheless that it was all in regular course, and requisite for the due administration of justice in the country.

The young man who had been knocked down so unceremoniously, had, it appeared, been himself the original aggressor—having been guilty of assault and robbery on the person of a member of the present assailant's tribe. Satisfaction had not yet been accorded to it by his own, and it was incumbent on him, in the mean while, till the fine had been duly adjusted, to avoid coming into collision with the aggrieved parties, and not to obtrude himself unnecessarily on the public attention. He had consequently paid the penalty of his rashness in the way I have mentioned, being reminded, by having them scored somewhat unpleasantly on his pate, that accounts had not yet been settled for him by his tribe.

This explanation was satisfactory to us, and I was pleased moreover to observe, that the first act of violence, which elsewhere would have been the signal for a general riot, was followed by no evil consequences. The whole company, aware of the expense attending it, were too apprehensive of a feud, to be betrayed into excesses that might lead to one. They all, therefore, acted as peace-makers, and the principals in the strife having been removed, and the damsels, who had fled from it as precipitately as a flock of wild fowl, having once more returned, the piper struck up a tune, and the dance proceeded as merrily as before.

A bustle among the crowd at the top of the glen now showed that the feasting was about to begin; large bowls of boya had been circulating very briskly for some time past, and Hussein our host at length made his appearance, sustaining a table piled with a whole pyramid of good things, and followed by a file of domestics bearing similar burdens.

Feasts upon the scale they are given here demand more than one pair of hands to officiate at them. Briareus himself would have been puzzled to do the honours. Our host, therefore, was assisted in his task by many stewards, or *aides-de-camp* rather, who might be seen flying about on horseback, each of them bearing aloft a well-loaded table. Around each of these centres of attraction the company, agreeably to the laws of gravitation in such cases, had quickly disposed itself; that is, all except the serfs, and lads of every condition, whose turn was to come after ours, but who were in the mean time liberally regaled, as they stood in patient expectation around the feasters, with lumps of meat and pastry. These they would retire with, and munch very modestly behind a tree.

After the banquet, and when, as Homer sings, "The rage of hunger was repressed," began the sports, which, as I have previously described, it is

unnecessary to detail at length. They consisted as usual of racing and rifle shooting. The former of these amusements is pursued with an emulation and zest which none but horsemen, I mean such as are "native, and to the manner born," can appreciate.

Put a Circassian on horseback, and though, like a beggar, he may not ride it to the devil, he will at least put its mettle very satisfactorily to the proof; and many an unfortunate Rosinante is, in order to make good its master's opinion, or rather his boasting, made to perform the feats of a Bucephalus. The Deli-Kanns, or mad-caps, who had hitherto conducted themselves so decorously, were no sooner mounted, than they fully justified by their pranks the epithet which had been bestowed on them. Such charging, chasing, racing, and hustling, it had never been my lot to witness elsewhere. One of the party, advancing to the assembled females, vaulted in full career from his saddle, and having received from the hands of one of them a crimson scarf, resumed it as lightly—then set off with his prize streaming like a meteor towards the main valley. Six cavaliers had started in pursuit of him, and the multitude were eagerly watching their progress, when the report of cannon all at once drew their attention to the harbour. A Russian brig

was exchanging a salute with the distant castle of Doba, but as it did not shorten sail, but held on its course towards the centre of the bay, it excited, if not alarm, at least an unusual degree of interest. The sports were suspended, and a party of us mounted our horses, and proceeded to an eminence that commanded a view of the sea. The brig having approached within a mile of the beach, cast anchor, and there, encircled by the hostile shores of Semez, but beyond the reach of its rifles—tranquil apparently as the waters where it was moored, but with broadsides ready—it had taken up its station, a truly suspicious looking craft. The Circassians, however, viewed it with little alarm, and, after stationing a few sentinels along the coast, they withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

Experiments in legislation—Proposed Polish force in Circassia—
Our equivocal position—Tougouse the Wolf—Visit to Tadjaguz
—Lament of Pshukoi Bey—Apology of the Wolf.

DURING the month of July, which we passed at Semez, there occurred no events of importance. The Russians continued at Pchat, occupied with the construction of their fort, but were otherwise, like the Circassians, inactive. The latter were far too much engrossed by their expectations of foreign assistance, the illusions raised by the despatches of their ambassador, and the solution and sequel of the Vixen affair, duly to direct their energies to the measures of internal organization, military and civil, required by the emergency, and which we, though as sanguine as themselves as to England's interference, did not cease to press

on their attention. The chief of these was the establishment of a permanent council, invested with administrative authority, and a standing force, however small, for the contingencies of the campaign. Mr. Bell was also desirous of forming a corps from the Polish deserters. But these innovations, simple as they might appear, and prompted, moreover, by the necessity of the times, were such as I afterwards found involved great organic changes in the customs and social institutions of the country. The associations on which the personal security and independence of the Circassians depend, are maintained by them with a pride and tenacity which renders the introduction of any other elements of power, for national or political purposes, a matter of very great difficulty. It is true that the national councils I have spoken of, have, from a sense of urgent necessity, more than once been invested with paramount authority; but that it should be delegated to any particular body of individuals, or exercised for any specific period or purpose, is an idea to which they could not for a moment reconcile themselves.

The year before our arrival, at the recommendation of an English gentleman who was in communication with their ambassador at Constantinople, twelve of the most distinguished of the

Tamatas, or elders, had constituted themselves into a permanent administration at Semez ; finding, however, that, instead of commanding respect and obedience, they were fast becoming the laughing-stocks of the whole country, and fearing that by the assumption of this extraordinary power they might endanger the influence they really possessed with their countrymen, they had, some months before we came, dissolved this parliament *sine die*, and sneaked away to their respective hamlets.

The experiment has never since been renewed, and the failure that had already taken place, no doubt, contributed greatly to deter them from attempting it again. The office also to be fulfilled by the individuals so elected, besides being a thankless one, must remain wholly unremunerated ; for the collection of a revenue would not only be opposed to the habits and feelings of the people, but, in the total absence of a currency, almost impracticable. Contributions in kind, though certainly levied by the different tribes for social and judicial purposes, would, I fear, be refused to the public service ; or rather there are no persons of sufficient authority to demand them. The same reasons would militate against the establishment of a standing force, not to mention

the reluctance of an armed population to pay for it.

Their repugnance, it is natural to suppose, would be still stronger to a Polish subsidiary force; indeed, if a corps of that nation could be organised without any expense to the Circassians, it may be questioned if, with the radical differences existing in the religion, customs, and language of their races, it would be at all tolerated among them. I admit there are now many thousand Poles living with the appearance of the most perfect docility under Circassian masters, which may be easily accounted for by their state of subjection and isolation from each other; but were they collected into a corps, and to do this an indemnity of four hundred plastres, or four pounds, for every man, would have to be paid to the proprietors; the inevitable consequence of such a concentration would be, the revival of all the national characteristics by which a race, noble, patriotic, and somewhat headstrong withal, are originally distinguished, and which, under such circumstances, could scarcely fail to bring them into collision with the inhabitants of a wild and mountainous region, so essentially differing from themselves, and accustomed to view all foreigners with suspicion and dislike. Such are the difficul-

ties inseparable, I am afraid, from the organisation of a Polish force in Circassia, and I have stated them fairly and conscientiously, believing at the same time that Mr. Bell, who I doubt not is equally on his guard against allowing his wishes to mislead him, entertains to this day a more favourable opinion as to its practicability.

At the time I now allude to, both Mr. Bell and myself strenuously urged this and other measures on the Circassians; but in addition to the aforesaid objections, there was another which, though not alleged by them, must, I imagine, have equally indisposed them to listen to us, and that was the mystification they still laboured under with respect to ourselves, and the anticipation of succours from abroad, which they fully believed would supersede the necessity of any change in the administration of their affairs. "Should England and the Porte decline to assist us, we will then withdraw our ambassadors from Turkey," they said, "and take measures for our own safety; or if they will send us out a governor, we will obey him in all things."

As to ourselves, from the deficiency in our credentials, it was easy to perceive they were placed in a no small dilemma, from which our own asseverations by no means tended to relieve them. The more strongly we disclaimed being the emis-

saries of our government, or of Sultan Mahmoud, the more certainly did they set us down as such, since the only alternative their simplicity admitted of was, that we were Russian spies, and in that case it was clear we should willingly have accepted the character they were themselves disposed to confer upon us. To say the truth, they were not a little puzzled, nor did our sagacious old host, or Konac Bey Shamiz Keri Oglu, to whom, as a *sheitain*, a very devil for penetration, we had been consigned with a view of worming out our secret, at all succeed in clearing up the mystery. Day after day would he return to the charge ; seated at the foot of our couch, or propped on the staff, or crutch, on which the wisdom of the Circassian Tamata is accustomed to support itself, he would, with many excuses for his rudeness and curiosity, stating they were hill-folk, (*dagh adamler*,) poor and ignorant, it might be, but “perplexed in the extreme,” set about a cross-examination, as close and ingenious as was ever instituted by counsel at the bar ; in which if he was baffled, it must have been simply for the reason that we had nothing to conceal from him. This sort of persecution proved sometimes very annoying to us ; and, perceiving his drift, I more than once took fire at it, for the inferences which resulted from his supposi-

tions were occasionally far from agreeable to us. Not only were we presumed to be the depositaries of Sultan Mahmoud's secrets, but, as it appeared, of his treasures also; and though what we had given in the way of presents served to convince them they were under no obligations to ourselves for them being far too much, in their opinion, for private individuals to bestow, it, on the other hand, fell equally short of what they conceived they had a right to expect from the dispensers of the sultan's bounty.

There was another circumstance, that gave us uneasiness. We began to have serious doubts as to the degree of freedom accorded to us. Communities, like individuals, accustomed to their own way in everything, seldom consult any other —nor could we escape from the popular control which had been hitherto undisputed in these mountains. But what was still more provoking, we found, on establishing ourselves at Semez, that the good people of that valley busied themselves with the same degree of solicitude about our affairs, as had been displayed by the national council of Shapsouk and Natu-koitch. As these had chosen to consider us as their special musafirs, or guests, and had determined we should not stir out of their provinces; so the Semizians, pluming themselves no less on our sojourn amongst them,

had resolved to appropriate us in like manner : nor was it only the honour of our presence they coveted ; they were also in hopes that the stream of our munificence, whose sources they supposed to be at Stamboul, would henceforth meander exclusively through their favoured valley.

Disappointed in their expectations, and perceiving the hints they gave to our dragomans and attendants were thrown away, they assembled the *Memleket*, or country, (for this imposing character is assumed by every petty council that may meet on local matters in Circassia,) and there, after a good deal of discussion, by which it was elicited that our backwardness was owing to the intrigues and bad disposition of those by whom we were surrounded, it was decided a deputation should wait upon us, and pray for a change in the administration.

All this was very amusing in its way ; but wishing to emancipate ourselves from attentions which had grown troublesome, we accepted an invitation given to us by Tchorook Oglou Tougouse, the wolf, to visit his house, situated in the valley of Tedjaguz, on the other side of the mountains. At the time the invitation was made, our host, whom we consulted, made no objection to it ; but as the day which had been agreed on drew near, many difficulties presented themselves to our departure.

Our horses were reported to be out of condition, the cavaliers who were to escort us were ill or engaged, and finally, as a reason for declining his invitation, the character of Tougouse, compromised as it was by his avowed transactions with the Russians, was strongly insisted on. But as we had previously been informed that he had made ample amends for his misconduct by his bravery and devotion in the common cause, we could only consider this another pretext for detaining us. Finding us deaf to his entreaties, or rather to his squire Ougasof, for when our politic old host had anything unpalatable to propose he was sure to do it through a third person, he had recourse to a measure which he as invariably resorted to on an emergency, and that was to summon to his assistance the most influential men of the neighbouring valleys—Mehmet Hagioli Effendi, the judge, and Kariak Oglou Ali Bey, of the tribe of Kutzuk.

The morning before that fixed upon for our journey, we were surprised by a visit from both these worthies, nor were we long in discovering the object of it. It was to join their persuasions to those of our host, in order to make us break our engagement with Tougouse. But this was a point which neither the coaxing and blustering of the burly priest, nor the more laconic recom-

mendations of the black-browed giant by whom he was accompanied, whatever might be the usual weight of such arguments, could accomplish.

Trifling as it may appear, our minds were made up about it; and if, as we now suspected, our personal liberty was to be circumscribed, we determined to ascertain the length of our tether. The good people of Semez, informed of our obstinacy, were not a little disconcerted by it, but, as a last expedient, invited us the next day to a farewell breakfast. This, they trusted, would operate as a diversion, and consume so much of the day, that time would not be left for our ride, which was one of four or five hours. Accordingly, when we reached the place, a green and sunny glade, where the feast was to be given, and which was on the side of the valley opposite to that of the road to Tedjaguz, we found a formidable array not only of *delikans*, or gallants, but of blooming damsels also; for Semez had mustered its beauty as well as its valour to way-lay us. Noon had passed away before the tables made their appearance; we despatched them, however, as quickly as we could, and declining to stay a moment longer for the sports, we slung on our rifles and ordered our horses. But there still remained something to settle. The memleket, or country, which provides for everything,

had not yet chosen our body-guard ; and to arrange this momentous affair a council ring was formed under a tree at a few hundred yards' distance from us, and was presently engaged in an earnest and protracted discussion.

All this, it was evident, was but another stragem to gain time ; so after two hours had elapsed, and we saw the sun was declining over the mountains towards Anapa, we sent a message to the council to the effect that we would no longer wait, but would proceed *instantly*, with or without escort, to Tadjaguz. They then perceived their opposition was fruitless, but, before they would abandon it altogether, a final effort was made to shake our resolution. If our minds were so absolutely fixed on paying a visit, they said, why not go to the house of Khass Demir, who had come thither on purpose to invite us? Khass Demir was one of the richest Tocars in Natukoitch, residing in the plain of Anapa, influential and respected, but in his manners a complete magnifico, and something of a churl withal. When we had refused this invitation on the ground of the one we had previously accepted, he came to us with the rest of the elders, who now enclosed us in their circle, and addressed us in the following terms.

“ If the *Beyzadés* are come here only for one

man, they are perfectly right in paying him this visit; but if they are interested in the welfare of the whole community, let them attend to its affairs: why do they not summon a council, and lay before it the measures they may deem necessary for the public advantage? Why not unfold to them the pleasure of the King of England and of Sultan Mahinoud on these matters; and inform them, moreover, when they are to expect the assistance, 'the gunpowder, cannons, and engines,' promised to them?"

To this speech I answered, without the least hesitation, and somewhat wrathfully, "That for a whole month we had, day after day, urged upon them the adoption of measures we deemed indispensable to the safety of the country—a fact which Khass Demir himself might have ascertained, had he been at the trouble of waiting on us before; we had also proposed a national council for the decision of them, but that, under one pretext or another, it had been constantly deferred; if such were assembled, we were still ready to attend, and though, as we had repeatedly intimated, we had no instructions from our government, we would, as private individuals, offer them the best advice in our power: we were afraid, however, that the subject of the council was now brought forward merely as an inducement for us

to break the word we had pledged to another person, but which no consideration whatever could prevail with us to do; for though we pretended to no authority from Sultan Mahmoud, we were at any rate free agents, not their slaves: we would therefore set out that instant to Tedjaguz, and they might detain us at their peril."

The tone of resolution we assumed with them more than ever convinced the Semezians that our disclaimer of authority from Sultan Mahmoud was only a piece of policy on our part. They were struck with sudden awe, and no longer opposed our departure. Many of the company, and among the rest Kutzuk Ali Bey, volunteered to escort us.

Our party, therefore, rode off to the centre of the valley, penetrated the forest, and our horses, fresh and vigorous, were soon straining up the side of the mountain. In two hours we had gained the summit, and in looking back into the valley we could see the multitude still collected in groups, and the council ring in the place we had left it; they had not yet recovered from the astonishment into which our assertion of independence, in a district that, time out of mind, had acknowledged no law but their own sovereign will, was calculated to throw them.

Bidding adieu for the present to the valley of

Semez, we pursued our way through the forest paths in silence. This was the first time that anything like a quarrel had occurred between us and our friends; and though we were conscious of being in the right, the excitement produced by it was as usual followed by a feeling of mortification and regret. We were also not without our misgivings as to the person we were about to visit; our Konag Bey Shamiz had positively refused to accompany us, and the escort that attended us was certainly smaller than it had hitherto been. All this might be owing to the bad repute into which Tougouse had fallen with his countrymen. But whatever repugnance we might feel to the company of one whom Mahmet Hadgioli, the judge, did not hesitate to class among the *Djacits and Psikaseys*, the renegades and ruffians by whom so many districts had been compromised and infested, it was overcome in some measure by more than one consideration, and believing these are in no small degree illustrative of the times and circumstances we had fallen upon in Circassia, I shall briefly unfold them to the reader.

There can be no doubt that a great change for the better has within the last few years taken place in the two provinces of Shapsook and Natu-koitch.

The turbulence of the Pshas and their retainers, the military aristocracy of the Caucasus, has been entirely suppressed there. The war between the provinces, and the feuds among the tribes, have also in great measure ceased: a sense of the common danger from without has acted as a panacea to intestine discord. It has served as an argument more efficacious than could before be discovered to the party who, under the banner of Islam, would establish peace and order in the land. "Had you previously submitted to the paternal authority of the Porte," said they to their countrymen, "it would never have abandoned you in your utmost need to the Muscovite: your only chance of regaining that protection is by timely repentance, and by the spontaneous establishment of tranquillity and concord, which will be a pledge to it of your future obedience." The extraordinary measures taken by this party for the promotion of their patriotic intentions, and which we were ourselves during our residence in the country witnesses to, I shall enter more fully into hereafter; at present it suffices to observe that they had been eminently successful, but the reform superinduced by their efforts, beneficial as it undoubtedly proved to the community at large, was not obtained without the

usual sacrifice of the habits and feelings of individuals.

The state of misrule that formerly prevailed here, though one by no means calculated to develop the best feelings of our nature, begat nevertheless the same chivalrous spirit by which the anarchy of the feudal ages was in some measure tempered and redeemed in Europe. In the transition to a more sober epoch, the knights errant of Circassia, like those of the West, found their occupation gone, and those who, like Tougouse, though old enough to remember a more stirring period, were still in the prime of manhood, could find, under existing circumstances, no means of allaying their thirst of enterprise, but in the deadly warfare with the Russians. The life which the "Wolf" was in the interim reduced to lead, had grown somewhat irksome to him; he had squandered his patrimony, and his habitual restlessness had not only led him to form the inconsiderate connexion across the Kuban which I have alluded to, but to join in some predatory inroads into the neighbouring districts,—offences venial in the good old times, but now no longer tolerated, and which he had been compelled to expiate by fines, averting, at the same time, the wrath of the community by an oath, on the

Koran, of amendment. His conduct, we were told, had been since then unimpeachable ; but the inaction to which he was condemned preyed on his spirits, and it was only on the eve of a battle that they resumed their former buoyancy, and partook even then, I fancied, a good deal of the restlessness of despair. I remember on one occasion his pressing me to settle some trifling affair, for, "Insh'alla," added he, "I shall be killed in to-morrow's engagement."

Mettle so undaunted as his was, in a national crisis like the present, by no means without its value ; as useful perhaps, in its way, as the reforming zeal of his warlike denouncer, Mehmet Hadjioli Effendi, the judge, whose rancour towards him I could perceive had been redoubled from the time we proposed to visit him. Our object in doing so, was to confirm him in his good disposition, not to encourage him in the cause he had renounced. We were afraid, however, after what had occurred at Semez, it might be misinterpreted ; and our curiosity, therefore, as we approached the dwelling of the Wolf, was not unmingled with anxiety.

The gorge in the mountains where the stream of Tadjaguz takes its rise, at first deep, narrow, and gloomy, opens gradually, after a succession of beautiful windings, into the plain.

The declivities on either side as we advanced were thickly covered with millet, the staple article of food in the country, and as welcome in its vivid verdure to the eye of the Circassian, as oats, the chief of Scotia's food, to the North Briton. Indeed, our conductors, by a very natural sort of second sight, beheld it already smoking on the platter, calling out "Pasta! pasta!" the glee with which they pointed to it being doubtless enhanced by the consideration that it was in their defiles comparatively safe, not, as in the plains, exposed to the devastations of the Muscovite. At length, as the stream and valley widened, we came to the domain of Tougouse, which presented, we were sorry to remark, notwithstanding its natural fertility, but a plentiful crop of weeds—dock, hemlock, and thistle, in every variety; neither were there any cattle to be seen on his estate. His pursuits, it was evident, were neither pastoral nor agricultural; the flocks and herds which had stocked these pastures in the days of Calabat Oglou, the richest *ougden* in Natu-koitch, and the hands of the sturdy hinds that had cultivated these fields, had been long since alienated by the prodigality of his heir.

We were yet at a considerable distance from the grove that shrouded his residence, and defiling along a lane, when a party of horsemen

rushing forward to meet us, showed that our approach had not been unobserved. Few of the houses of the chiefs are without an observatory with a warden in it to notify the arrival of friend or enemy. The troop that now presented itself was composed of Deli-Kans, headed by the page or Djerat of our host—a more jovial, hair-brained, wilder-looking rout never followed the hounds in Kilkenney or Kildare. They did not stop when they had reached us, but, yelling and discharging their pistols, dashed by at full speed; then reining up their horses, returned to escort us at a stately pace to our konac. As we drew near to it, another cavalier sallied out of the grove, and making his horse perform sundry evolutions and curvets, fired off his rifle by way of salute. This was our old friend Hatukoi, who seemed quite to have forgotten the indignity which we had formerly put upon him, and expressed, by a profusion of antics, his delight at seeing us again; but though civil to him, we thought it best not to give him too much encouragement. We had no wish to be persecuted for presents by him as before.

On entering the plantation and riding up to the gate of the konac, we found our host there ready to receive us. He was dressed, without tchekmen or tunik, in a plain white *enteri* or

doublet, setting off his noble figure to the greatest advantage, and armed only with the cama or two-edged dagger at his girdle. His demeanour displayed nothing of the boisterous levity by which it was usually distinguished, but, as became him in the reception of his guests, was courteous and dignified. But the circumstance most gratifying to us on this occasion was the presence of a number of the most distinguished persons of the province, who had been assembled to grace our visit, and among whom we recognised not only Selim Bey, prince of Wana, but also Hadji Ismael Effendi, a judge, who, if inferior to Hadjioli in political consideration, was undoubtedly his superior in learning and piety. It was obvious, therefore, that the ban of interdict under which the latter would have placed Tougouse, was wholly disregarded by his countrymen, and he had made this muster for the express purpose of proving to us, that if he had detractors and enemies, he did not want for friends also to bear him in countenance. To these, as we learned through our dragoman, he intended making formal appeal against the ungenerous attempt made to ruin him in our opinion, in which he was determined, cost what it might, to re-establish himself; among other means to which praiseworthy intent he was

preparing to set before us a suitable array of presents. But we had arrived too late for the immediate execution of his design ; we accordingly retired to our apartment, and after a comfortable supper, stretched on our pallets, soon forgot the adventures and anxieties of the day.

On issuing into the court next morning, we found that preparations on a large scale had been making for a rural holiday. An arbour, green and garlanded, had been constructed as a canopy, beneath which cushions and carpets had been spread for us. A cool recess during the summer heats, which are here excessive, is a no small luxury, and the larger bower itself which sheltered the hamlet, and evidently from its antiquity a remnant of the primeval forest that had once covered the whole valley, consisted of trees whose breadth of shadow was now peculiarly delightful. Over the tops of these, lofty as they were, one gigantic oak rose proudly eminent ; nor were we disappointed on paying a visit to its trunk, round which the linked embrace of ten men scarcely sufficed to put a girdle. It is in the bosom of these shadowy retreats that the Circassian is wont to " repose his wearied virtue ;" and even to us, though our relish for it had not been improved by previous hardship and peril, the situation, as we lay surrounded by listless groups

of warriors on the grass, was not without its charm. The cooing of stock-doves, and the murmur of the Tadjaguz stealing on its way through the adjacent groves to the Adheucum, only added to the soft and dreamy tranquillity of the scene.

Among the guests on this occasion was a young minstrel of some celebrity—not that he possessed the talent of a composer, or the still rarer one of improvisation, nor that he was gifted with any extraordinary vocal powers which the airs of Circassia, though beautifully plaintive, yet, like those of all mountaineers, simple and monotonous, do not demand—but that he could sing or recite dirge and battle song with a pathos and fire inferior only to those of genuine inspiration—accompanying it with the rude sort of mandolin I have formerly described. He now gave us the lament of Pshukoi Bey; his voice was subdued and sorrowful, and running at the close of every line in breathless rapidity, like the gush of anguish, almost on the same note. He was answered in tones scarcely less impassioned by the chorus of his comrades. These were the wild-looking youths we had met on the road, but their fierceness had yielded to the charms of music; and as they now encircled the minstrel with their arms locked round each other's necks

and joined in the lament of a fallen brother, the group itself formed a picture as truly affecting as any I had ever contemplated. Telim Bey, Prince of Wana, who now sat beside us, had been a near relation of the young hero whose prowess and early death was celebrated. He at first joined faintly in the chorus, he was then silent, and lastly, as tears began to flow, he turned aside to conceal the emotion by which his noble and expressive features were agitated.

LAMENT OF PSHUKOI BEY.

Oh brave his heart ! though few his years,
And generous too as brave ;
Not his the home for which he fought,
And which he died to save !*

Ay-a-ri-ra.

Hark to the drum of general Zass !
See where his Cossacks come ;
Brave Pshukoi wields amidst their ranks
His sabre to their drum.

Ay-a-ri-ra.

Fallen is his house for evermore,
For broken is its stay !
His sister weeps—nor home hath she,
Nor shelter from that day.

Ay-a-ri-ra.

* The Circassians consider themselves under no obligation to defend any part of the country but their own particular district.

Her raven locks than, Leipsic * silk
More glossy black,—she tore,
And she smote her breast,—for her house's prop,
Brave Pshukoi, was no more.

Ay-a-ri-ra.

To general Zass he rode amain,
Who fled—for life—away;
But he took his steed of the race of Tram,
His steed and trappings gay!

Ay-a-ri-ra.

Two horses on that fatal day
He fairly wearied out;
But tired not his own mettle down,
His heart—it was so stout.

Ay-a-ri-ra.

A wooer he went to that country!
But came back on his bier;
His mother his lifeless face bedews
With many a briny tear.

Ay-a-ri-ra.

Allah be thanked, she weeping said,
No plundering thief was he:
But died, his sabre in his hand,
For God and Adighee!

Ay-a-ri-ra.

* This allusion proves how far the trade, the emporium of which was a Leipsic fair, had extended itself. In a similar spirit, I have heard another song, where the charms of a brisk young beauty were compared (a flattering compliment to its strength by the way) to English gunpowder.

The women of his hamlet, too,
All tore their breasts and cried,
Alas! the day, alas! the hour,
That our defender died.

Ay-a-ri-ra.

The women of that hamlet wept,
Their saviour they deplored;
They and their babes they knew were saved,
When that he drew his sword.

Ay-a-ri-ra.

His life he yielded—but his arms
Still deck him on his bier;*
And the black rifle, at whose sound
The Moscoffa crouched with fear.

Ay-a-ri-ra.

His blood-red entari † in the fight
Did shine upon that day,
As in the darkest thunder-clouds,
The sun upon his way.

Ay-a-ri-ra.

His black steed, wheeling like a hawk,
He through the battle rode;—
His sleeve all reeking with the tide
That from his sabre flowed!

Ay-a-ri-ra.

* It is here considered very disgraceful to lose one's arms in battle. He who returns without them is despised ever after.

† In general the Circassians, when taking the field, put on the worst and coarsest attire they can find; but many of their young heroes, out of emulation, a spirit of bravado, or aspiring to the honours of martyrdom, render themselves conspicuous by wearing an entari of the gayest colour.

Dying, he said, "O take my steed
 Unto my host's dear daughter,"
 Her eyes to see 't shed tears of blood,
 While others wept but water.

Ay a-ri-ra.

A martyr died he, and the gates
 Of Paradise, as he fell,
 Did open wide to welcome him,
 With saints for aye to dwell.*

Ay-a-ri-ra.

I shall not enter into the details of the banquet prepared for us, and which, if surpassed by others we had sat down to in the number of dishes, yielded to none in respect to quality. The Princess Guavcha, the celebrated daughter of Indar Oglou, one of the two partners in the affections of our host, now evinced her pre-eminence as a pastry-cook, as she had before, in the making of my tunic, established her fame as a sempstress.

In this manner the day had passed very pleasantly. There was one, however, who evidently had viewed the whole proceedings with impatience, and this was our host the Wolf. He was meditating a grand *coup*,—he had resolved to make a

* I have in these rhymes endeavoured, though unsuccessfully perhaps, to imitate the quaintness and simplicity of the old ballad style, as best preserving the spirit of the original; though the metre is altogether difficult, and rhyme unknown in it.

transfer to us of the whole of his worldly possessions, and by affording us, as he thought, this substantial proof of his loyalty and integrity, to obtain a signal triumph over his calumniators. But these magnanimous resolves, like all secrets in this country, whether relating to public or private affairs, had prematurely transpired. We were therefore in some measure prepared for the scene which was to be enacted, and were rather amused than astonished when the company by whom we were surrounded, suddenly opened their ranks and formed themselves into a vista, at the end of which the superb white charger of our host was discovered attached to a tree, while his squire advanced towards us, bearing in his arms a coat of chain armour, followed by another of his retainers with a sabre.

In the background, among the trees, stood, in an attitude of profound humility, a man and a woman, whom we understood to be the household slaves, the last out of more than a hundred left him by his father, and whom Tougouse was about to consign to us with the rest of his moveables. His presents being thus marshalled before us, all of a row as it were, he himself stepped forward in person. He had screwed his physiognomy, naturally so funny and flexible, into a penitential grimace, rendered still more comic by a nervous twitch,

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imparting almost perpetual motion to his beard and mustachios. As he was but an indifferent orator, and understood but few words of Turkish, Selim Bey undertook to speak in his behalf; but the pantomimic shrugs and gestures by which he accompanied him, kneeling all the time upon our carpet, were no less amusing than expressive, and he now and then confirmed, sometimes rather *mal-a-propos*, it will be seen, the speech of his friend. This was as nearly as possible to the following effect :

“ Our companion here is but too well aware of the pains which certain individuals have been taking to disparage him in your opinion. He is sensible that he had enemies as well as friends in this country. Indeed no brave and independent man can be long without both the one and the other, (Wallah gertchek dur—true, so help me God ! exclaimed Tougouse.) What they may have laid to his charge he does not know, nor for that matter does he care much either. He will meet his accusers beard to beard whenever they feel disposed; and though, between ourselves, Tougouse in some of his proceedings may have conducted himself no better than he should do; (Wallah gertchek dur—true, so help me God ! again interposed the candid Tougouse;) yet, for all that, he may have behaved not much

worse than his neighbours. If the Bey Zadés were to investigate all the misdemeanours committed here during the last forty years, (which God forbid,) I should like to know whose hands would be found perfectly immaculate. Then as to his dealings with the Russians, which, although he was completely deluded by them, the Kiafirs ! he cannot pretend to justify, has he not, by a solemn oath on the Koran, renounced them all in future, except where they would themselves be the first to decline them in the field of battle, and where he promises, *Insh'allah* ! to render an account of them quite as good as can be furnished by any of his accusers ? In the meanwhile, to remove every doubt you may have with respect to him from your minds, he here freely presents to you everything of which he is at this moment possessed ; so that when you shall have accepted of his gifts, which he humbly entreats you will not refuse, he will *al-hamd-ullah*, so please the Lord, have nothing left him in the world but his two wives, which, as a good Mussulman, you know he cannot part with."—(Wallah gertchek dur—true, so help me God ! responded the Wolf.)

As we had previously made up our minds not to take advantage of our host's prodigality, we declined, although applauding his good disposition, to accept of anything but his coat of mail for

ourselves, and the sabre for our interpreter. These, we had been assured, he could very easily replace. Our acknowledgments to him were also seasoned with some advice, which was taken in very good part by him. He even offered, if we chose, to renew in our presence the oath he had formerly taken to abjure all connexion with the Russians.

That day and the next we remained at his house, and he accompanied us in person on our return to Semez.

CHAPTER III.

Visit to Hadji Ismael Effendi—Abdoullah the clerk—Hadji Guz-Beg the Lion—Russian Colony in Circassia—Reconnoitring.

BEFORE we left the valley of Tadjaguz, we accepted the invitation of Hadji Ismael Effendi to spend a day with him. We had, since our arrival in the country, on more than one occasion, had reason to admire the moderation of his conduct and the modesty of his demeanour; in which respects, though without any pretensions as a politician, he afforded a complete contrast to Hadjioli. As a tribute of my regard for him, I had presented him with a history of Turkey, lately published in the Turkish language at Constantinople, and which, books being scarce in Circassia, had been an object of much solicitation and competition

among the learned. He had been not a little elated with his prize, and assured me that he was in the habit of reading a portion of it every Friday to his congregation at the mosque. This the reader may perhaps think a strange place for the delivery of historical lectures, but the fact was, that the annals in question, though professedly relating to the Ottoman empire, not only embraced the lives of Adam and all his posterity, but were half of them occupied with what took place before the creation, entering into most circumstantial details with respect to the angels, genii, &c., who flourished in those times, and all of which Hadji Ismael found to be both instructive and edifying to the Circassians.

For the invitation we received from him on this occasion, we were perhaps as much indebted to the young man who lived with him in the quality of muezzin, or clerk, by name Abdoullah, a sort of universal genius, who, having received his education at Anapa, had ever since the ejection of the Turks from that fortress been condemned, much against his will, to rusticate in the mountains, his only resource, in the absence of more competent judges, being to astonish the natives by the extent and variety of his accomplishments.

Not only an adept in the service of the mosque, acting as imaum, muezzin, or sexton, as occasion

required, he was moreover an experienced barber, and from his superior skill in gunnery had been appointed topgi-bashee, or chief of the engineers, of Adheucom. It is true that the charge, under existing circumstances, did not afford the field he could have wished to his abilities, the artillery of that district consisting only of one piece, which had been captured from the Russians, and was now lying dismounted and buried in the long grass, serving only when powder, of which it consumed a prodigious quantity, could be spared for an occasional *feu de joie*. The aspiring youth had, on our first visit to Adheucom, in various ways courted our notice; and, among other things, I remembered his having seized upon our banner and scampered away with it to exhibit his grace as a *bairactar*. On the present occasion he had been put upon his mettle by the praises we had bestowed on the culinary skill of the Princess Guavcha; and with the view of eclipsing her, he had proposed to the Cadi Hadji Ismael, to divide with him the expense of a banquet, in which his talents and his taste would have abundant scope to display themselves. On repairing, therefore, to the place where we were to be entertained, a spirit of emulation was visible to us in all the arrangements. A rural pavilion, at least twice as large as that of

Tougouse, had been erected for us opposite to the mosque, and when, a signal having been given, the tables made their appearance rank and file, it was at once evident that in point of numbers this army of eatables would have the superiority of at least two to one over that of Tougouse. The column was headed by the Effendi himself, red hot with hospitable ardour, while the indefatigable Abdullah brought up the rear, his sleeves rolled up to his very shoulders, showing that he had himself been art and part in the messes that were to be set before us, and his countenance radiant with the triumphs he anticipated in their consumption.

We were sitting down to this banquet, when pistol-shots in the neighbourhood announced the arrival of some distinguished guest, and there was a murmur of exultation among the crowd, as Guz-beg! Guz-beg! was repeated simultaneously by everybody present. Fully to appreciate the power of these heroic monosyllables on the minds of the Circassians, we must transport ourselves to times far more warlike and adventurous than those we live in,—times of which the popular idols were a Guy of Warwick, a Wallace, or a Rolando. How otherwise can we do justice to their enthusiasm, or to the merits of him whose bare name had so vividly excited it? To cleave

a passage single-handed through a Russian battalion, to scatter like chaff a troop of Tchernamortsies, to sweep away herds of cattle from the Muscovite pastures, or to make prisoners of a whole village, and march them home, men, women, and children, to the music of bagpipe and tabor, are exploits which few in the present day would feel disposed to emulate; and this for the same reason, I presume, that as few are alive to the glory which is their recompense, that of being celebrated by all the minstrels on one side of the Kuban, and to the still greater honour of being execrated by all the inhabitants of the other,—nay, held in such terror that their name, like that of Guz-beg, should be a spell among the beldames to scare their crying children with.

These are the trophies that make a hero in the Caucasus, and he who shall have achieved them may look for all the demonstrations of favour, simple as they may be, which a proud and grateful people can lavish on him. For him shall there be feasting in hall and dancing on the green; him shall the maidens caress, and minstrels glorify: in short, like the lion-hearted Hadjis, his life shall be a round of alternate fighting and revelry. Of these pastimes, Guz-beg, I must do him the justice to say, had a decided predilection for the former; fortunate,

therefore, to be born in a land where there seldom occurs a scarcity of either. Such, in fact, was his eagerness for hard knocks, that, as we were credibly informed, during his pilgrimage to Mecca, (the only time he was put on short allowance,) he was, in order to keep up his spirits, constrained to amuse himself in mock-fights, tilts, and skirmishes, with his brother Hadji, to whom, however, they bore too striking a resemblance to reality to yield by any means the same degree of satisfaction. On his return from the shrine of the prophet, he went to pay his homage to Mehmet Ali Pacha at Cairo, and the reception which their favourite there met with at the hands of the politic old viceroy is still dwelt on with pride by the Circassians. Dispensing with the forms of state, he received the Hadji as one heroic adventurer should receive another, seated him on his own divan, clothed him with a caftan of honour, and heard from his own lips the story of his adventures. In conclusion, it is said, he made him an offer of service, but this was firmly but respectfully refused by the Hadji, who felt that his roving habits had peculiarly unfitted him for the trammels of Turkish civilisation. Bidding adieu, therefore, to Egypt and its pacha, he hastened to where his heart already was—banqueting with his friends on his beloved mountains,

or battling with the giaour on the banks of the Kuban.

I shall not tax the credulity of the reader by recounting all the marvels recorded of the Hadji's prowess, though fully believed (for what will not enthusiasm believe ?) by those who recounted them to us. But with all his renown, he had of late, it was whispered to us, been accounted anything but a safe or prudent leader ; the consequence of which was, he was at present not very successful in recruiting, and when he raised his standard for a foray, the numbers that mustered to it were not near so great as flocked to those of Mansour or Shamiz. It might have surprised us, perhaps, that though at no period of his career remarkable for that essential attribute or moderator of valour called discretion, he should in his old age, when it has a decided tendency to develop itself, have taken leave of it altogether. But there was a reason for this, independent of his fiery temperament—grief at the untimely death of an only son, embittered, perhaps, by the thought that he had in some measure impelled him to it ; grief which disdained every milder vent, found in the shock of battle, while goading the old warrior to acts of fury and desperation, its most terrible expression.

The bereavement I allude to happened to him

during the campaign of 1834, in which the Russians, under Williamanoff, advancing into the interior of the country, succeeded, after a series of sanguinary conflicts, in erecting the fortress of Aboon. It was on this occasion that the Hadji first took his boy to the wars, and, both by precept and example, showed him the way (with him ever the shortest and most dangerous one) to victory, bidding him sternly not to disgrace his lineage.

While hewing himself a passage one day through the Russians, a rather nice undertaking, and one which he himself described to me as *shimshek*, (a flash of forked lightning,) whose success or failure is instantaneous, his horse, pierced by a musket-shot, threw him headlong, a lion among the hunters, in the thickest of them. Such the number and fierceness of his assailants, that we were positively assured he was fairly lifted from the ground by the bayonets thrust into the rings of his haubuk. Small hope of life, and less of rescue, could he have had in this extremity. Yet, however unexpected, that rescue came, and we may conceive better than describe his emotion when, in the youthful warrior who, breaking the ring of death that encompassed him, had come to conquer or perish by his side, he recognized his son. Dear as it was dreadful, the occasion was chosen

by the stripling to prove he was not unworthy of him.

In the mean time the report of their champion's danger had spread like wildfire among the men of Shapsook, and they prepared forthwith to make a desperate effort for his deliverance; the charge of their cavalry, as it poured in a mass into the plain, was irresistible. Breaking the ranks of the Muscovite, they bore away in triumph those whom they sought, Guz-Beg alive, his son a corpse, from the midst of them.

The loss of his boy, whatever face his pride might put upon it, was a severe blow to the old Hadji, for he had been his only one; and though he had still seven daughters, he would have esteemed them a ransom all too cheap for him who died to rescue him. Indeed, this harem full of spinsters, which other fathers would have coveted as so much wealth, was but a standing jest with him; for his reverence for the sex in general, like that of all those, I fear, to whom they have been over-indulgent, was by no means great or exemplary.

Such were the accounts which I had at different times collected with reference to Guz-Beg, and the reader may imagine I felt considerably excited in confronting him for the first time. His appearance by no means disappointed me.

His frank and military bearing, accompanied by a slight and not ungraceful roll in his carriage, inspired others with the ease and confidence which he felt himself. His arms were the bow, quiver, and Damascus blade, and a shirt of steel gleamed at his breast from beneath his tunic. His dress was not rich, but nicely adjusted, and very complete. His morocco shoes in particular were well fitted to his small and delicate feet; for the Hadji had feet and hands which would have excited the envy of a *petit-maître*. But his breadth of chest, compact and muscular frame, though not exceeding the middle size, were such as had evidently been cast in the most perfect mould of strength and activity. It was in his countenance, however, in the grim composure of his mouth, and in the wild flash of his keen grey eye, that, even without any previous comment from his countrymen, I should have read the lion. He was an old but by no means a toothless one, and though a beard of snowy whiteness swept his breast, the high colour of his cheek, his glance of fire, his elastic tread, all bespoke him in the prime and vigour of his existence.

The Hadji having sat down to the banquet with us, we became very good friends before we parted again; for whatever he might be by habit,

he was anything but ceremonious by nature—a boon companion, and something of a wag withal. His jokes, as far as I could understand, were none of the most refined or witty; but who could refrain, when so renowned a warrior chose to be facetious, no matter how dull the jest, from being infinitely delighted with it? We, for our parts, joined heartily in the fun, though rather uproarious, and sometimes, as he slyly pilfered the choicest morsels from our trenchers, a little at our own expense. The conversation after dinner turned upon war, the only theme he cared for or was conversant with.

It was with some surprise, and even concern, that he learnt we had not been witnesses to a single fight since we had come to Circassia; an omission which he proposed to remedy by taking me to one out of hand. If I would accompany him, he said, he would collect a war party, and we would set out to Shapseen the very next day. Dangerous as I knew it to be, I could not, after feasting, decline the honour of fighting in company with Guz-Beg, and accordingly accepted of his invitation. The next morning he had left Tedjagus before we had risen, and, agreeably to promise, set about recruiting for our expedition. We ourselves took leave the same day of our

kind host Hadji Ismael and his officious and sprightly assistant, and, accompanied by the Wolf and his followers, once more set out to Semez. But to finish at present with the Hadji, whom we were soon destined to lose sight of for a considerable time, I shall anticipate my narrative by stating, that a day or two after we had reached home he made his appearance, and announced to us that he had failed in his attempt at a gathering, in consequence of everybody being employed about the harvest. Whether this was the real cause of his ill success, or that the men of Natu-guortch had no great confidence in him as a leader, or whether, as we strongly suspected, the chiefs had again interfered to prevent my taking the field in person, I can by no means be certain. The latter supposition, however, is strongly confirmed by the fact, that the Hadji, a few days afterwards, determined, it appears, on some onslaught or enterprise, having hastily collected a body of Deli-Kans in Shapsook, laid an ambuscade in the neighbourhood of Shapseen, for a Russian foraging party, which, to the amount of a thousand, we were told, were either killed or made prisoners.

We returned to Semez by a route different from that by which we had come under the guidance of

a respectable old Tacar, of the name of Shupash. He had been the attaluk or foster-father of our friend Tougouse, and I have already, in my enumeration of the leading members of the national council, had occasion to allude to his sterling good qualities. His house was in the neighbourhood of Anapa, and he had promised, if in our way home we would spend the night there, to procure us a near survey of the fortress, with the military colony and detached forts that had been erected for its protection. As this was the only attempt at colonization which Russia had made in Circassia, we were very curious to see it. The result had been abortive and ridiculous in the extreme. Three or four square miles of territory had been in some measure secured by these forts, and a few wretched peasants induced, by the advantages held out to them in a ukase of the Emperor, to emigrate thither with their families from the south of Russia. With these, and others who, to complete the number, had been dragged forcibly from their homes, the colonists established there had originally amounted to two thousand ; but though assisted by the garrison of Anapa and its independent forts, who, to the amount of fifteen hundred men, were almost constantly under arms, and though armed and disciplined for their own defence, they found themselves

exposed night and day to the fierce and incessant persecution of the natives. The cattle they had been provided with disappeared with unexampled celerity, and they found they could not carry on the simplest operations of agriculture, sowing or reaping, without interruption of the most disagreeable nature on the part of the Circassians, the balls from whose rifles would be singing about their ears as they worked, or, would occasionally rush in among them, and, in spite of cannon and infantry, sweep away men, women, and children in a whirlwind of cavalry.

Nor was this all; they soon discovered, to their cost, that the promise of exemption from conscription, which was the most tempting of all that had been made to them in the ukase, was more than the Emperor was disposed or could afford to keep. One out of the two thousand had been draughted for soldiers in the year 1836, and out of the four hundred that remained, forty-five had recently shown a fair pair of heels to their Arcadia. It was by questioning these that we learnt the particulars; all of them, we found, preferred being drawers of water and hewers of wood to the Circassians, to the condition of colonists on their own account at Anapa.

The house of Shupash was at the foot of the hills which terminate the lower Caucasian range

as they sink into the plain of Anapa. He had already been burnt out of one habitation, but resolutely kept his ground in this dangerous neighbourhood, scarcely at two leagues' distance from the fortress. The Circassian picquets, however, were far in advance, and the grove that surrounded the hamlet was guarded by fierce and vigilant house-dogs. This was the first, but not the only occasion by a great many, that we partook of the hospitality of Shupash, and in no other konac did we hang up our arms with greater pleasure, assured as we were, by attentions outweighing a thousand professions, of the sincere good-will of our host. Many was the hearth, many the sheltered hamlet in these mountains, familiar to us as our home, but none did we approach with more satisfaction and certainty of welcome, than that which sent up its smoke over the chesnut grove at Tchowallos, and from which, as often as we drew near, the hearty old fellow to whom it belonged would issue forth with a cheer, waving a green branch as he charged us in mimic warfare. This, however, was not the only charm this hamlet possessed. The cup of welcome there was presented to us by a Hebe, the most beautiful we had seen in Circassia. She was very young—a rose-bud still unopened, but promising, both in symmetry of shape and feature, the per-

fection of female loveliness. She was an orphan, whose father, the son of our host, had been killed by the Russians; so she had devolved, with her widowed parent, to the care of the warm-hearted veteran.

The next morning, mounted on his charger, armed and equipped in the completest manner—for he was farmer and warrior by turns—Shupash was leading us on the way to Anapa. The ground we traversed at first consisted of open meadowland and corn-fields, with here and there gardens for fruit and vegetables. There were melons and cucumbers in abundance. The greater part of the plain of Anapa, though no longer inhabited by the Circassians, had not been entirely abandoned by them. It was much too valuable and fertile to be given up to the Russian colonists, and they therefore continued to cultivate it, the owners of the soil posting sentries on every side of it by rotation. More than once we fell in with them on our way. On every knoll of rising ground there was a horseman, and others were lurking among the bushes in the hollows, whom, as often as we caught a glimpse of them, the calpac and hassirs proved to be friends. We now came to ground of a more broken character, and advanced more cautiously, till at length, riding though a coppice of stunted oaks, we obtained a

sight of a small round detached fort, situated on the brow of a long low promontory, where it terminated abruptly in the plain. Behind this, and completely screened by it from our view, was the military colony.

Our party now divided itself. Mr. Bell, with some others, rode towards the hills on the left, while I proceeded with Shupash and the others to reconnoitre. Immediately under the fort were a number of soldiers making hay, while others were keeping guard; but the whole of them having taken the alarm as we drew near, decamped as quickly as they could, and soon after I saw one of our party sweeping round the foot of the hill on his charger in pursuit of them. It being our intention to penetrate beyond the fort and the rising ground that covered the colony, it was necessary first to ascertain that there was no infantry concealed behind it; and for this purpose we dispersed, in order to find some eminence which would command a view of it, and also, as the men in the fort were already busy with their guns, to divert the fire, which, by keeping in a group, we were sure to draw down upon us. I was myself riding along the edge of the ravine that separated us from the ridge in question, when four horsemen suddenly appeared on the top of it, their figures distinctly relieved by the blue sky

beyond them. Concluding that they belonged to our own party, I descended into the ravine with the intention of joining them. The bottom of it, fortunately, was marshy, and as I was with difficulty picking my way through it, I was overtaken by Nogai, the younger son of our host Shamiz, who asked with apparent wonder where I was going. On my informing him, he led me back to the brow of the ravine, and showed me my mistake. The horsemen, I now saw, wore the high Cossack cap, and not the Circassian calpac, and I felt an awkward sensation, I confess, when I found among what company I had been so nearly precipitating myself.

But while I was congratulating myself on my escape from this danger, a cannon ball, which came whizzing over our heads from the fort, warned us that we were by no means in safety where we stood. Other shots were fired as often as the stragglers of our party appeared within the range of the guns, and Shupash, apprehending that some mischief would befall us, collected us together again. A short consultation was now held, in which, while some proposed to make a direct attack on the Russian picquet in front, the majority, with Shupash at their head, decided it would be more prudent to examine their position by a *détour*, and discover if they were supported

in it by infantry in ambuscade, of which their boldness in keeping their ground afforded a strong presumption. We, therefore, proceeded a few hundred yards to our own left, and from a station overlooking them we satisfied ourselves there were no troops between them and the colony, which was at a distance of about half a mile. We accordingly galloped on, as if with a design of cutting off their retreat, and at the same time a Deli-Kan, of our party, who had been watching our motions from the ravine, no sooner saw us advance, than dashing over the brow of the eminence, he was the next moment sword in hand among the Cossacks. Four of these to one Circassian are odds which the latter seldom decline, and in this instance, probably because they saw how he was seconded, they took immediately to flight. One of them, however, he seized, and had he not been too intent on plunder, he would probably have made a prisoner of him. As it was, the trooper slipped through his hands with the loss of his carbine and cloak.

We had now a distinct view of the military colony, extending some hundred yards in an oblong shape. It was defended on every side by a stockade and several pieces of artillery. The inside was occupied by rows of huts in every respect inferior to those of the Circassians.

While I was engaged in this survey, the quick and practised eye of our veteran leader had been by no means idle, and when I proposed to advance a little further he laughed, and pointed towards the hills on our left, immediately over Anapa. On looking in the direction indicated, I must confess I was somewhat startled to see a body of infantry, which, judging from the lengthened line of bayonets flashing in the sun, amounted to not less than five hundred men, in full march, and evidently making a circuit to intercept us, as we had done with the Cossacks.

It appeared we had not much time to lose, if we wished to secure our retreat; but Shupash, pleased that so small a reconnoitring party—for there were not more than ten of us—should have called forth so powerful a demonstration from the garrison, was still disposed to amuse himself:—danger was a thing, old as he was, he loved to dally with. “*Bismillah!*” he cried, and drawing his sabre and giving his horse the rein, he made a feint of charging the enemy, apparently to see if I would accompany him.

Finding I kept abreast with him, he and the whole party suddenly drew up, for the Russians were almost within musket-shot of us. This, however, was what they were accustomed to, and they still took matters coolly. Every man dismounted

and looked at the girths of his horse ; then, all being ready for a start, away we swept with a yell over bush and brake towards the mountains. Having parted with Shupash, I hastened, as it was getting late, through the defiles leading to Semez, where I was happy to find Mr. Bell, on whose account I began to feel some anxiety, had arrived before me.

CHAPTER IV.

Our unpleasant position—Suspicious of treachery—Arrival of a Russian Corvette—Ambuscade—Russian plot against us—Russian commercial projects to subjugate the Circassians—Visit to Ali Bey.

WEEKS, months, had elapsed, and we had now reached the middle of August, without receiving a word of intelligence from Constantinople, nor had there, since our stay in the country, been any arrivals from Asia Minor, or, as the Circassians called it, “from over the way.” Our position in the mean while was far from enviable; not only had we to suffer the heart-sickness produced by the delay of our own hopes, but also to support the sinking spirits of our friends, whose eyes were incessantly turned on us, as on the mysterious arbiters of their fate.

The three months that we had been without

news, an age almost to Englishmen, might, for what we knew, have been prolific in events of the first magnitude ; at any rate, the affair of the Vixen, which Lord Palmerston had declared in the House of Commons to involve a question of peace or war, had doubtless by this time been decided,—and that, we still flattered ourselves, in a manner not less honourable to the country, than just to the parties interested in it. In our evening rides along the beach, or seated among the ruins of the old castle of Soujouk, how often had we unconsciously explored the waters of the Euxine for a sail ! doomed to disappointment—though we had scarcely ventured to hope. Vessel after vessel would glide along the coast, but they were not those we looked for ; all bore the hateful ensign of the oppressor, and, instead of bringing us the expected intelligence, were there, in fact, to prevent its arrival.

Many of our good-natured neighbours, in the mean while, had endeavoured to encourage us, and to delude themselves. More than once were we visited by some hoary-headed swain, who had dreamt a dream, and felt assured we should receive the most welcome tidings in the course of the week. Those infallible sources of information, the mutton bones, were referred to every day, and fleets in full sail were seen ap-

proaching the coast in the *scapula* or shoulder-blades. Various other means of divination no less simple than profound were resorted to, and all of them promised very magnificently; so convinced indeed were the authors of these prognostications that they would be realised, that they demanded, as a matter of course, the *backshish*, or gratification, it is customary to make to the bearers of good news. At length rumours, which seemed to have a better foundation, positively announced the arrival of the British fleet in the Black Sea. We were informed by travellers who had come from the southern part of the coast, that a Turkish vessel had just arrived there, and that the passengers and crew had all declared upon oath that they had seen our fleet anchored in two divisions off Sinope and Samsoun. My Greek servant, Demetri, whom the reader may remember I had left in charge of my merchandise near Pchat, having heard the same reports, rode over to Semez to communicate them to me, and being at the same time of a speculative turn of mind, he submitted to my approval a very ingenious project he had formed in event of the fleet coming to Circassia. Practically acquainted with the tastes of our countrymen, he proposed to take a house on the coast and lay in a stock of rackee and oxen, and thus, by an arrangement "qui

miscuit utile dulci," no less agreeable to them than profitable to himself, providing them with grog and beefsteaks.

To say the truth, Demetri was not the only one amongst us in whom these reports, universally believed by the Circassians, raised the most chimerical expectations. Strangers to what had taken place for the last three months, we looked upon the arrival of a British fleet in the Black Sea, as a glorious but not an extraordinary event; it seemed rather a very natural consequence of the Vixen affair—a measure, moreover, which, independently of its effect on Circassia, we knew would be a deathblow to Russian ascendancy in the East. We may be excused, therefore, if we ourselves were somewhat too sanguine, and seriously thought of addressing letters to the commander of H. M. squadron in the Black Sea, giving him such information as might prove useful to him, provided his operations embraced any plan of action on the tribes of the Caucasus.

But we were destined to be still more tantalized, and any doubt we might have entertained appeared changed into certainty, when one evening, as we were retiring to rest, Sheretluk, the son of our host, and old Osman, my Djeraah, rushed both together into the guest-house, bawl-

ing as loud as they could, "Backshish ! backshish ! largess ! largess ! glorious news !" much with the same clamour and impetuosity that the hawkers of newspapers cry, "Second Edition of the Courier." The intelligence they brought was certainly beyond all price : they stated that Emir Agha, a Turkish merchant, residing in our valley, had just returned from Ghelinjik, where he had the day before witnessed the arrival of a fleet of twenty sail, all carrying a red flag. Could we for a moment doubt what that red flag was ? Not the Russian certainly, and of what nation beside could it be but England ? Our own meteor flag waving in triumph on that coast where it had been a few months before so audaciously insulted.

Early the next morning we set out for the heights that command the bay of Chelinjik. On our way through the valley of Schirez, we stopped at the house of Emir Agha, the merchant who had brought the report, in order to inform ourselves more minutely with respect to it. It was well we did so ; for, however mortified we might feel at the result, we found it was useless going any further. The red flag which we had hailed with such enthusiasm proved to be nothing more than a signal concerted between the Russian fleet and army, in order to combine their operations. A few days afterwards we received positive intel-

ligence, that, leaving a garrison in the fort which had been completed at Pchat, they had advanced simultaneously along the coast to the south. The troops, after a week's hard fighting, succeeded in forcing their way to Shapsine, about eight miles from Pchat, and there set about the construction of another fort. But the peculiar position we here occupied tended not only to render us the dupes of illusions like these, but also to expose us to frequent alarms and misgivings. Many circumstances occurred to excite our suspicions; the first time we fell in with evidences of this nature, was during one of our rides along the coast, where we used to repair almost every afternoon, for the benefit of sea-bathing; sometimes to the pebbly beach in the bight of the bay, where the land-locked waters had the appearance of a lake, and sometimes round the cape, to the ruined castle that had formerly commanded its entrance. This was itself an object of no little interest. We could trace on every side of it the trenches and parallels by which the Duke de Richelieu had taken it from the Turks in 1811; and we knew full well it had been the scene of many a fray between the Turkish garrison and the mountaineers, both before and afterwards. It was finally evacuated by the former in 1820, and was then completely dismantled.

The rampart was now in ruins, and goats were browsing in its grass-grown precincts. On the northern side of it, separated from the sea by a narrow strip of land, was a sheet of salt-water or lagune, the resort of aquatic birds. The whole had an air of deep solitude and abandonment. We were therefore the more struck, perhaps, on observing one evening, not far from the fortress, a pile of sticks reared transversely on a hillock, and on the same line with this telegraphic arrangement, another at the water's edge.

To add to their suspicious appearance, they were placed at the opening of an unfrequented path which we knew to undulate along the sides of the hills, and lead through the thickets that covered them, almost to the door of our habitation. By this way a party of men might steal upon us by night unobserved, which by the main road, through the bottom of the valley, it would be impossible to do. Here was abundant food for disquietude : these signals boded us no good, nor in removing them could we dispel the ideas of treachery, captivity, death, or more than death, the gloom of Siberian banishment, which they had excited in us. On revisiting the spot the next day, we found the signals we had thrown down erected precisely in the same places again. We had now not the least doubt but that a train

had been laid for surprising us, but how or where it was to be set on foot still baffled our penetration. Anapa was much too distant to dread any attack from it; and though the battlements of Alexandriusky were just perceptible on the other side of the gulf, we knew the garrison had abundance to do in providing for their own safety, without dreaming for a moment of molesting us; the third and only means that remained for such a purpose was the landing of an armed force from a ship of war. A corvette, as I have already said, had anchored in the bay about a fortnight before, but sentinels were, according to custom, immediately placed along the coast by the Circassians, so that no attempt of that nature could have been made without their perceiving it.

The corvette had disappeared a few days afterwards. But in descending one morning into the valley of Semez from Tchowallos, where we had been paying a visit to Shupash, we were alarmed to see the mysterious visiter again moored in the harbour. The Circassians, however, set their watch as before, and assured us we had nothing to apprehend from it. Thus it shortly became an object of indifference, and remained so till an accident occurred that more than ever roused our suspicions. One evening some shepherds were tending their flocks at the sea-side,

when a boat having been suddenly lowered and manned from the corvette, it approached the spot where they were standing : when within hail, a Circassian interpreter, who was on board, showed a flag of truce, and desired to speak with them. To this the Circassians, having driven away their sheep from the shore and got their rifles ready, made no objection. The interpreter then made a speech—a truly ingenuous and pathetic one—the gist of it being that the crew of the corvette, having tasted nothing but black bread for some months past, had been seized, at the sight of the sheep gazing upon the shore, with an irresistible longing for mutton. They wished, therefore, to make a friendly bargain for some of the sheep, and to meet them henceforward only on a footing of good fellowship, assuring them that they had always entertained the sincerest regard for the Circassians, and that it was much against their will that they were employed to blockade their coast.

The Circassians, in reply, approved very much of their candour, and equally admired, though in an enemy, their philanthropic sentiments and their taste for mutton chops. With respect to the latter, however, as they had been able to dispense with them so long, they could perhaps wait a little longer, and control their appetites

till the next morning, when they would be prepared to treat with them on the matter. In the course of the conversation some mention was incidentally made of the Englishmen who resided in the valley, and the whole of the proceeding was such as to convince us there was some design against ourselves concealed under them. The chiefs and elders were also decidedly of opinion that the application for sheep was a mere cloak to treachery, and that the applicants therefore should be treated no better than so many wolves in sheep's clothing. A counterplot was accordingly laid for capturing the boat and its crew.

Early the next morning a sharp firing in the bay announced the *dénouement* of this affair. One must have witnessed, to form a true idea of it, the fierce alacrity with which the Circassians obey the first signal-sounds of strife. In a country where, according to the Turkish phrase, the very mountains, trees, and rocks are at war with you; it is to be expected that the men will not be slow to rise in its defence. I could see that even the boys Sheretluk and Nogai, directly the summons was wafted to us on the gale, required no other prompter. Their weapons were snatched from the walls, and they and the serfs all hurried to the scene of action immediately. As I galloped myself down to the beach, I could see the whole valley was

up and swarming towards the menaced point : but on reaching it I found the device for capturing the boat had miscarried. The Russians, their appetites apparently sharp-set for their mutton, were stirring with the lark and punctual to their appointment, while the Circassians, who had prepared a very different breakfast for them, waited among the bushes. Three or four of the party then advanced with some sheep to tempt the boat's crew on shore, and three falling into the snare had already landed, when something occurred to excite their suspicions, and they retreated quickly to their boat. The Circassians immediately opened their fire upon them, and sallied from the hiding-places. Many of the men in the boat were killed before it could regain the vessel, whose cannon was directed without the least effect upon the beach. After venting their rage and disappointment in some furious broadsides, our friends in the corvette set sail the same day, and never up to that of my departure made their appearance in the harbour again.

The conduct of the Circassians on this occasion was such as we could not at first altogether approve of ; but any scruples we might have felt on that score were subsequently removed by Pshakoi Bey, Prince of Zadoog, who, during a visit he paid us, furnished us with information that left us

no doubt of the intended treachery of the Russians. A spy, who was escaping into Russia, had been intercepted by the prince, and, having been examined on oath, had confessed that he had been bribed by the governor of Anapa to put up on the shore the signals, the object of which we had so truly surmised. The captain of the corvette, however, had not ventured to land the party that was destined to surprise us, and returning to consult with the governor of Anapa, they had determined, before making the attempt, to tamper with the Semezians. With what success they did so, I have just recounted.

A question relative to a mercantile transaction in which some Armenians were engaged, was about this time referred to our judgment. Cheker Oglou, the principal of the parties interested, had obtained leave from the national council to bring out of the fortress of Anapa, for sale, a quantity of salt and other merchandise, under the plea that the stock had been purchased before the prohibition had been put on the trade. The council, partly from an abstract sense of equity, which, I believe, had always a powerful sway over their decisions, and partly from its respect for a few influential chiefs who protected these Armenians, had acceded to their petition. In so doing they had acted against the advice of Mr. Bell,

and I think contrary to strict justice and discretion, which would not have weighed the interests of the community in the same scale as those of individuals. The consequence was such as might have been expected. All those who had suffered by the interruption of the trade, (and in the neighbourhood of Anapa there were many,) protested loudly against the partiality which the council had been guilty of, and there was even some talk of plundering the property of the Armenians as it left the fortress.

But before I proceed any further with this affair, it will be necessary, in order fully to comprehend its bearing and importance, that the reader should be aware of the extraordinary steps which have been taken by Russia for the establishment of commercial relations with Circassia, and which she very justly, I believe, considers a more effectual means of subverting their liberties than war itself. Could she succeed in destroying the trade with Turkey, which ministers not only to the material wants, but also, by keeping up the connexions with their co-religionists, to the moral energies of the mountaineers ; and in substituting her own, by which they would become dependent upon her for articles of the first necessity, such as salt, &c., she might reckon almost to a certainty on their subjugation.

The importance she attaches to this object has been proved by the prodigious efforts she had made for its accomplishment. For this she has maintained for several years past an extensive blockade of the coast; for this she has lavished blood and treasure for the erection of forts in every creek and harbour of it; measures which, though they have hitherto signally failed, since the Turkish traders constantly elude her cruisers by sea, and are dragged on shore in spite of her forts by land, yet demonstrate most powerfully how much she has at heart the isolation of these countries from all connexion but her own—how anxious she is to cut off their commerce of the Black Sea—and with it the hopes and sympathies that unite them to the Mussulmans of Turkey, and to freemen all over the world. Her plan in this respect is not unlike that which I have seen adopted by the Circassians themselves, in reference to some gigantic oak—the monarch of the woods which for ages has set their puny axes at defiance. By incision all round it into the bark, or, as the woodsmen say, “by girdling it,” they arrest the circulation of the sap, and the sources of vitality are destroyed. When this ingenious process has been performed, though the roots may take some time to moulder, the stem and the branches will immediately decay.

The Circassians, in the mean time, have not been deceived as to her object. The fortitude they have displayed in resisting the temptations of her commerce, is even greater than that with which they have braved the horrors of her warfare. The chief article of importation, and one, as I have already observed, of first necessity to them, is salt, and for this they actually pay to the Turkish merchant ten times the price at which they could obtain it from the Russians. To enforce the prohibition of the Russian trade, they have neither revenue officers nor customs establishment of any sort. Its execution depends entirely on the feeling which prevails of its necessity, and thus every man finds a check in his neighbour, if not in his own conscience. This remark applies to the community at large : exceptions are of course to be found, and among the Armenians, an avaricious race, whom the instinct of gain has scattered all over the Caucasus, patriotic feelings are altogether out of the question.

The only principle by which they are governed in their commerce is, that which our political economists declare to be the only legitimate one—*superior cheapness*. *Alish Verish*, buying and selling, with them absorbs every other sentiment ; indeed, they scarcely appear to have an idea beyond it.

Their very tombstones are decorated with the emblems of their respective crafts, and in the paintings which I have seen in their churches at Constantinople, the rewards and punishments which await them in the next world, are invariably borrowed from the trades they have followed in this. Profit and loss are the only heaven and hell that Armenians can picture to themselves. Their history is very instructive, particularly so to the nation of "shopkeepers," an epithet, which, however undeserved at the period it was applied, is becoming every day more appropriate. Destitute of the elevated sentiments, the higher social virtues, by which alone a people can become great and powerful, the Armenians have not only ceased to rank among nations themselves, but are the bane of all those who admit them to their bosom. It is they who have so long furnished in Turkey the class of saraffs or usurers, the parasites of power, and the jackalls of oppression. By similar arts do they thrive in Circassia. In the pacified or neutral provinces of the Kuban, in Zadoog, Hatukoi, Kerkenai, and Demegoie, they live apart in their own village, and carry on an active trade with Russia, the profits of which are no doubt considerably augmented by the political intelligence they convey to her. But in the

belligerent provinces of Stratukoitch, Shapsook, and the Abbosahks, the game they have to play is more difficult and dangerous. In the midst of a fine and vigilant population, whose suspicions are easily roused and as promptly acted upon, their only chance of safety is to attach themselves to the influential chieftains, whose protection they repay with a liberality which is a sufficient evidence of its corruptness. Through their agency, Russia is informed of everything that takes place in the country, and they are the instruments on which she chiefly depends for carrying into effect her commercial projects. The prohibition of the Russian trade by the national council was a severe blow to them, but though prevented from pursuing it directly, the Armenians still found a door open in the neutral provinces, and through these indirect channels the treasonable traffic still continued to circulate.

The most considerable of these merchants in Natu-koitch, was Aretine, son of Balthazar, Marigny's agent, who was assassinated at Anapa, by the celebrated Ip Chaoush.* This bloody episode

* This fanatic, to escape the consequence of his crime, took refuge in the mountains, where, to say the truth, it was made but light of, or rather looked upon as justifiable homicide. The attempt of Marigny to open a trade with the Circassians at Anapa under protection of the Pasha, (liberty to trade there having been

in the narrative of Marigny had made a painful impression upon me, and it was with some surprise, when Aretine was presented to me, that I heard he was the son of Balthazar. I certainly should not have thought, after what had occurred, of meeting him in Circassia; but an Armenian, as I have before observed, allows no other consideration to interfere with his interest; and while the powerful protection of Mansour Bey assured his personal safety, it was more than suspected that, notwithstanding his father's example, he was himself playing the same treacherous part. It may appear singular, on the other hand, that the patriotic Mansour should patronise a traitor like Aretine,—but patronage in the Caucasus is esteemed the first of privileges, of which its possessors are

extorted by the Russians from the Turks,) had even, according to the admission of the Chevalier himself, roused the indignation of the residents to the highest pitch. He had failed in his repeated endeavours to establish direct commercial relations on other parts of the coast, (a circumstance proving, by the way, that till it suited her purpose, Russia never recognised that coast as belonging to Turkey,) and he at length obtained a firman, by means of which he still trusted to force his obnoxious wares on the Circassians at Anapa. After this, he had the simplicity to expect that he should have been welcome there. He himself, however, appears narrowly to have escaped the tragical fate that overtook Balthazar, his Armenian broker, who, in promoting his views, had incurred a still greater degree of odium, and in stabbing whom at his shop-door, Ip Chaoush in some measure acted as the popular champion.

ever proud and tenacious, not permitting even the abuse of it to be called in question. They seem to think with Davy, in *Henry the Fourth*, that it is a hard case if an honest man may not now and then protect a rogue who is his friend.

The patron of Cheker Oglou, the Armenian, who had petitioned to withdraw his merchandise from Anapa, was Keriak Ali Bey, and it was chiefly through his influence in the council that its sanction to that effect had been obtained. The indulgence thus accorded him was viewed by those who resided in the plain of Anapa in a very invidious light; nor, as the time approached for the withdrawal of the goods, did the discontent confine itself to murmurs.

It became evident the people were hatching some mischief among them, and that the train of wagons containing the property of the Armenians would, on leaving the fortress, be in no small jeopardy. We were ourselves privately consulted on the propriety of fleeing them as they came out, for it was presumed that as Mr. Bell had been originally opposed to the admission of the goods, we would also countenance the pillage of them. It is needless to say, that these strong measures met our decided disapprobation—we saw that the authority of the national council, however questionable the justice of its late decree,

was under all circumstances to be upheld. The whole country would otherwise be involved in anarchy. But our remonstrances seemed to have been scarcely attended to, and there was good reason to believe that the project had not been abandoned. Our neighbour the Prince Bastu Oglou Shimaf, ever the foremost in a scramble, had disappeared over night with some of his prowling retainers, and it was easy to conceive on what errand they had absented themselves. Determined, if possible, to prevent an outrage wherein it appeared we should be seriously compromised, I arranged with Mr. Bell to proceed myself to Sooka, in the vicinity of Anapa, and there to take measures with Hadjioli, the judge, and Keriah Oglou Ali Bey, for the safe convoy of the merchandise, and to offer, as an unequivocal proof of our sentiments, to accompany the escort in person.

Early the next morning, in pursuance of this determination, I set out with our host Shamiz and old Osman, my djeraah, for Sooka. Our road lay through a glen, the secret windings of which I had more than once, in my walks with Mr. Bell, endeavoured to penetrate, to the no small annoyance, however, of one of the inhabitants, who had hinted to our host that we might, for what he knew, have been sent there as spies

to betray his retreat, which had hitherto escaped observation, to the Russians. Keri Oglou, though he had warned us of these suspicions, now conducted us himself through this pass, which, after following as usual the course of a brook for six or seven miles, at length ascended the mountain side. From the summit we beheld the valley of Sooka, forming, as it swept down to the sea, a grand aperture in the mountains. After crossing it, we entered the glen of Batchéjik, well-wooded and watered, and containing the residence of our friend, Mehmet Hadjioli. He was not at home when we arrived, but we were ushered into his guest-house, where, after waiting some time, as he did not make his appearance, we proceeded to the house of Ali Bey, about half an hour's distance further.

On our way we discovered a party of rustics mowing in a meadow: our host rode up to them, and had entered into conversation before I perceived that his worship the judge was among them working in his shirt and drawers with the rest. He was assisted by his son and two labourers. We explained to him the object of our visit, and having obtained his promise to join us at Ali Bey's, we rode on thither. Ali Bey's house was situated on the banks of a lake called Abrauch, resembling one of the smaller high-

land lochs, and encompassed on every side by hills, the wooded and winding shores of which make it exceedingly picturesque. The Circassians have a tradition, that in former times there stood a city there which was submerged with all its inhabitants, in punishment of their sins, by an earthquake, leaving in its place this sheet of water, more innocently peopled at present by the fish beneath and the water fowl on its surface. The stir and strife of the doomed city, if such had ever been, had yielded to the deepest solitude, to which the habitations of the Circassians scarcely formed an exception, since as usual they were either buried in thickets or folded in the windings of a glen.

Ali Bey received us with much kindness, but declined at first entering upon the business that brought us there; he deferred doing so till the arrival of the judge. It was evidently a sore subject with him. We also despatched a messenger for Mr. Bell, who I was anxious should share with me the pleasure I derived from the interesting scenery I had fallen upon.

In one of the tenements of this hamlet I found a forge. The smith was one of Ali Bey's serfs, and was reputed to be a good workman. The blacksmiths and silversmiths generally be-

long to the class of tocafis, or freemen, but they are occasionally to be found among the serfs, and who, when such is the case, share the profits of their industry with their masters. A skilful hand is considered a most valuable acquisition. Arms of all sorts are manufactured by them—guns, pistols, swords; though for the most part the armourers are merely employed in repairing them. Steel is wrought here in great perfection, and tastefully inlaid with both brass and silver.

Towards evening we were joined by Mr. Bell, and before we sat down to our repast we took a ride along the borders of the lake. At the further extremity was a sylvan amphitheatre of gradual ascent. Traversing this and climbing the ridge beyond, we caught a glimpse of the sea, where our conductor pointed significantly down a deep chasm, forming a creek for its admission at the bottom. There was just room for a vessel to be towed there, which, though scarce at a league's distance from Anapa, would have been quite safe from observation. In returning by the same road, we overtook a goatherd with his flock, from which Ali Bey very unceremoniously appropriated a kid; but whether he took it in virtue of his signorial rights, or whether as a tribute which

armed travellers are accustomed to exact whenever they meet a flock on the road, I cannot precisely state. The goatherd, however, gave it up with a good grace, and Ali Bey, having tied its legs together, threw it over his saddle-bow. A truly original figure he cut as he rode before us, and a somewhat indifferent specimen of his order. Fancy a raw-boned giant *en déshabillé*—for he was showing us over his domains—in nothing but entari and drawers, his toes stuck naked into his stirrups, and his pony ridiculously out of proportion to the monster on its back; yet he ambled away with an air of great complacency, and bestowing occasional thumps on the poor kid, which, by no means approving of its novel position on the saddle-bow, kept up a lamentable bleating all the way.

On reaching the house he handed it over to one of the serfs, and ushered us to the open brow of a cliff, projecting from the woods and overlooking the lake. An arbour of branches and reeds had been constructed there for us, and we sat down to a good supper with the judge and Keri Oglou. When the tables had been removed, our host, who had been doing the honours, took his place beside us, and entered into the subject of the Armenians and their property. The aggression they had been threatened

with was a direct blow at the pride, if not to the interest of their patron, and he felt it accordingly. His wrath was especially kindled against Shimaf, whom he denounced as the prince of *Psikaseys*, or freebooters, and whom he proposed to immolate with as much ease and as little compunction as he would a capon; and as to the rest of his neighbours who had evinced so little respect for his khatir, i. e. held his honour so cheap, he would be even with them also, for he would quit their part of the country incontinently and retire to Abassahk or Zadoog; or, rather than remain there, into Russia itself, for there was more grace and conscience even among the Giaours than was left in that neighbourhood. This sort of threat I have observed to be not uncommon in the mouths of the influential chiefs and *tamatas*, when they find themselves thwarted by their neighbours.

Their personal consideration always reflects credit on the district where they reside, and in a country "which lies all before them where to choose," the facility with which they can remove renders it the study of all to conciliate them. In the case of Ali Bey, it may be questioned if his withdrawal would have been regarded as a misfortune so serious as he wished us to believe; at least, the ironical manner in which it was alluded

to by the judge inclined us to think so. Hadjioli had in the council strenuously opposed the petition of the Armenians, though finally yielding to the majority; and it was evident that he now thought the virtuous indignation of Ali Bey at the conduct of his neighbours would prove eventually to be based on a sentiment no more exalted than their own, viz. an inordinate longing for salt—a condiment which he took occasion to denounce as the root of all evil. So luxurious and pampered, he declared, the appetites of the Circassians had become, that they could not on the slightest provocation control them; and no sooner did they hear of a few wagons of salt upon the road, than they at once threw off all restraint—father, mother, country and religion, were forgotten for it; yea, added he, looking archly at his neighbour, rather than eat their soup without it, they will part with such an ornament to society as this.

After some further conversation, it was arranged that the merchandise in question should remain in the fortress till it could be transported in safety, and that a special council should be held for this purpose in the neighbourhood.

Other topics were then introduced, and the conversational powers of our friends the judge and Shamiz beguiled the moments pleasantly

till bed-time. They had both of them spent many years in Turkey, but their impressions with respect to it were very different, and yet highly characteristic of the individuals. Hajioli had been educated in one of the *Medreises* or colleges of Constantinople, and he had been dazzled in his youth by the prospect of the riches, honours, and pleasures which the career of Ulema had held out to him, and which he made no small merit with his countrymen of having relinquished for their sakes. He had still a hankering, however, after the flesh-pots of Stamboul, and his mouth watered with the bare imagination of pleasures which to us appeared anything but delectable. Not so the austere and high-souled Shamiz, who in a very different spirit had enrolled himself as a volunteer among the defenders of Islam. His pure and chivalrous nature had been proof against the seductions of the Turkish capital, and he thanked heaven that his countrymen were yet strangers to the vices which had blunted the sabre of the Osmanlis, nor did he envy those who, base-born in their own country, had been raised to power and splendour in Turkey, for he had seen them as often terminate their career by violent and ignominious deaths. Better for them, said he, had they still kept sheep on these mountains. Sentiments like these may appear

trite enough ; but in the mouth of the patriarch and warrior sage—who had sounded the depths of glory, and returned with the fruits of his experience to his native woods and pastures—they were fraught with unusual weight and dignity. They were in keeping, too, with the deep seclusion of the woodland scenery, “the deserts inaccessible,”—inaccessible, that is, to the cares and vanities of civilisation. At least this was the feeling they had often inspired me with ; and which, while listening to the calm and flowing accents of that “old man eloquent,” half drew from me the vow to make there my abiding dwelling-place.

How deep, how vivid was the spell, which a land blending so many features of beauty, and repose, and romance, and mystery, at that moment cast around me ! Seated with armed chieftains in a summer-house,—graceful forms gliding with furtive steps in the adjacent shrubbery—the carol of the shepherd boy on the distant hills—the farmyard with its rural sights and sounds behind us—and beneath, with unruffled surface, and its legend of God’s judgment, the solitary lake : the latter, now reflecting the hues of the setting sun, shone at our feet like a sheet of burnished gold ; for though his orb had sunk behind the hills wherein it was deeply set as a frame, the skies

were yet coloured by his beams, and gradually, as these grew dim, the mirror below was darkened. We then followed our host to the guest-house, where couches were already prepared for the night.

CHAPTER V.

Announcement of our determination to leave the country—Visit to the family of Zanu Oglou Zefir Bey—Djefs the hunchback.

WE had returned to Semez and resumed our previous way of life, which we began now, for we had reached the end of August, to find irksome from its dulness and monotony.

Our intention in coming to Circassia had certainly not been to confine ourselves to a corner of it. The reason we had remained so long in the valley of Semez, was, that the chiefs had represented to us that the people were encouraged by our presence, and pretended they would be greatly benefited by our advice. But when we discovered that they had no intention of taking the field against the enemy, and that our counsels

in other respects were slighted, we determined on leaving them and pursuing our travels into the interior. We had serious doubts, I must confess, of our being permitted to do so. It was easy to see that notwithstanding the show of respect and deference to our wishes, we had hitherto been almost entirely controlled in our movements. An effort was therefore to be made for the assertion of our liberty, and the success of our resolute behaviour on the occasion of our visit to Tedjaguz convinced us that bold and decided measures were the best. Had we merely expressed a desire to travel, we knew too well that, without openly combating it, our friends would be at no loss for excuses and pretexts to detain us. We therefore explicitly announced our determination in a Turkish letter, which was written by our friend Hafiz the merchant, and which our Georgian interpreter took round for us to the principal chiefs of the province. In this document, after setting forth all we had done with the view of assembling a council, and raising a war party, we told them, that finding our endeavours fruitless, and that our further stay could be of no benefit to them, we had determined to proceed to the seat of the war at Shapsan; and if on arriving there it appeared to us that our presence was unnecessary, to prosecute our journey to Abbasak.

The effect of this missive exceeded our most sanguine expectations. The day after we had despatched it, our guest-house and court-yard were filled with anxious visitors from every part of Natu-koitch; most of them with some propitiatory offering, such as honey, butter, cakes, or baksema, at their saddle-bows. All deprecated our resolution of leaving them, and promised, if we would stay, they would strictly attend to our suggestions, and, as an earnest of their intentions, they immediately agreed to summon a national council for the discussion of the objects we had pointed out to them.

Yielding at length to their entreaties, we consented to be present at this council, and a few days afterwards we set out for Westagoi, the place appointed for it.

Crossing the mountains at the pass of Tchowalos, we traversed the plain of Anapa, where it is bounded by the hills at its northern extremity, and then struck once more by a wooded ascent into the latter. We reached the plains of the Kuban the same evening, and took lodgings for the night at the house of a Toraf. The place assigned for the medjilis, or council, was that where the Westagoi issues from the mountains into the plain, through which its course to the north-west might thenceforward be traced by a

long undulating line of foliage, now enriched by the mellowing tints of autumn. We had been invited to the house of Djefs, the *Kambour*, or hunchback, a name renowned in border warfare, and we accepted the invitation the more readily, that it was intimated we should find there the wife and family of the celebrated Zann Oglou Zefir Bey, the most illustrious individual of the country, but who had been more than six years a wanderer from it in the delusive hope of obtaining foreign succour.

The Circassians, as I explained in the beginning of this work, appalled at the duration of the war and the inexhaustible resources of their enemy, had at length looked abroad for assistance. To Zann Oglou was confided the task of invoking it, and in taking from the chieftains and elders of every province, stream, and district, between Anapa and Caratchai, their seals and credentials for his mission, he exacted from all of them on his departure a solemn oath on the Koran, never to lay down their arms in his absence, but to persevere in the struggle till he should return in triumph, or bid them despair of foreign sympathy. Nobly have they redeemed their pledge. The storm has in the mean time raged repeatedly in their devoted valleys; their houses have been burnt, their property swept away, their bravest

slaughtered ; but to this day have they fought on ; still do they await the return of their delegate.

He also has been faithful to his trust. He has in every accessible quarter appealed against the oppressors of his country. It were a task of melancholy interest to follow him step by step in his pilgrimage, to the footstool of the Egyptian ruler's throne at Cairo, to the antechambers of the Turkish ministers at Stamboul, to his exile at Bazarjik, everywhere opposing to the coldness, contumely, and cajolery, with which his advances have been met, the singleness of purpose, the ardour, and constancy of a patriot. The individuals at whose hands he has experienced the greatest kindness have been Englishmen whose acquaintance he had made through the medium of Mr. Urquhart, and who, if they have been unable to promote his views, have at least soothed him in his misfortunes, and ministered occasionally to his necessities. He on his part felt no shame in accepting relief in the shape of pecuniary presents ; for his ideas on these matters had been formed in Circassia, where he had himself, after the primitive fashion of the country, indulged in the greatest profusion. Indeed, his former improvident habits had ill qualified him to contend with the poverty he was doomed for the first time to encounter at Constantinople.

There he continued to languish in obscurity, yet not without hope, till the autumn of 1836, when an incident occurred, which rendered him the object of a distinction still more disastrous to him.

The favourite amusement of the late Sultan Mahmoud was archery. An amateur in the art himself, he always distinguished excellence in others. One morning, at the *Og-meidan*, where he was accustomed to practise, there appeared among the competitors for his favour a stranger, meanly attired, but of noble bearing. If his exterior, like that of Ulysses among the suitors, at first excited contempt, it was soon lost sight of in his superior skill. He not only surpassed all his rivals at the bow, but it was clear from his handling of the weapon, that he had not always wielded it in sport.

Sultan Mahmoud was delighted with the performance, and the interest he took in the archer was by no means diminished when he heard the story of the patriotic envoy. Certainly the snuff-box in brilliants he received, a customary present to the ambassadors of foreign powers, was not presented him merely for his manual powers at the *Og-meidan*. Such, at least, was the opinion of Mr. Bowtieneff, the Russian minister, who, on being informed of this transaction, as he is of

every other at Constantinople, thought fit to resent it as an insult to the Russian emperor, and insisted on the immediate expulsion of the Circassian emissary from the Turkish capital. Finally, when there appeared to be some demur upon the subject, he presented himself at the Porte, and declared that either he or Zefir Bey had to quit Constantinople forthwith.

The former was ordered to repair to Bazarjik, in the neighbourhood of Adrianople, and Mr. Bow-tieneff had thus the satisfaction of making the Sultan, by whom he had been unadvisedly befriended, the instrument of oppressing him. A pension, however, was assigned him in his exile, and he still kept up a correspondence with the friends he had made at Constantinople,—a correspondence to which there is reason to believe the English government, if not directly concerned in, was by no means a stranger. While there was the remotest prospect of assistance from abroad, he deemed it his duty to remain there. Messenger after messenger had come to him from every part of the Caucasus, to ascertain what progress had been made in his negotiations, and to represent the cruel calamities and privations to which his countrymen were in the mean time subjected. But setting them an example of fortitude, he still keeps them to their engagement; and till he return

to them with the tidings that their prayers *have* been definitively rejected, they are held by an oath, which they dare not violate, never to surrender to the Muscovite.

We had been conversing on this very subject when we came, in the course of our ride, to a beautiful spot of ground almost completely encircled in one of the windings of the Westagoi. It was evident, from the number of fruit-trees, there had formerly been an orchard in that place, and we presently came upon traces of a once-flourishing and extensive homestead ; but the acacia and lime trees that had heretofore sheltered its various tenelements, waved now over blackened heaps of ashes. All around was ruin and desolation ; the destroyer had been there at his accustomed work, and the simultaneous Wai ! Wai ! Wai ! that burst from the Circassians as we paused to contemplate it, found a sorrowful response in our own breasts when we learnt whose residence it had formerly been—that of Zann Oglou Zefir Bey. How often had it echoed in other times to the sounds of revelry ! for here the chieftain, surrounded by four hundred vassals, serfs, and dependents, had been as renowned for his hospitality as he was formidable for his power. But, after his departure, his household had been rapidly broken up and dispersed, since whatever regard his retainers might

feel for his consort, submission to one of her sex was a thing most repugnant to their prejudices. To complete her misery, her habitation had been set fire to by the Russians, and she was now subsisting on the bounty of a neighbour, Djefs the hunchback, who had given her and her daughters an asylum in his house.

An hour's ride further on brought us to it, and we were assisted to alight by the *Cambour* himself. He was a short, square-built man, being almost as broad as he was long, with a hawk's eye and beak, and, in short, displaying in his person, deformed and diminutive as it was, the muscular strength and keen animal spirits which the predatory habits of threescore years on the Circassian border had tended pre-eminently to develope. He was reputed to be one of the surest guides in a foray, every inch of the hostile territory on the right bank of the Kuban being as familiar to him as the left.

He was lively and polite in his manners, and very assiduous in his attentions to us. In the number and quality of his dishes he was surpassed by nobody we had visited. In many houses where we had been, there had evidently been much scheming to lengthen out the array of tables, and pastry precisely the same in composition, though varying in the ingenious devices

into which it was moulded, had frequently figured in four or five successive courses. But the credit of our entertainment was not entirely due to our host; he was assisted in doing the honours of his house by an old emigrant from Anapa, whose Turkish education had initiated him in the mysteries of a more refined gastronomy than could be boasted of by the Circassians. He was also remarkably civil to us: indeed, I had observed that all the Anapolans, who since the occupation of their native town by the Russians had been dispersed about this neighbourhood, showed us great good will, looking upon us, I suppose, as the harbingers of a return to the good old times when they lived in clover under their King of Cocagne, the Pacha of Anapa.

The next morning we received a visit from the daughters of Zefir Bey. The two little maidens were dressed in the Turkish style, and very prettily behaved. After kissing our hands they seated themselves, the elder on the couch of Mr. Bell, and the younger on my own. Mr. Bell, to amuse them, produced his musical snuff-box, and they were made completely happy by some trinkets we gave them. They were at an age when it required little to make them so, unconscious, poor things, though themselves involved in it, of the ruin of their house; being, in fact, rendered

orphans as much by the absence as they would have been by the death of their father. To satisfy the whole party, we gave scissors and needles to their attendant, the daughter of our host, who was, if anything, better dressed than the children she accompanied, though the humility of her demeanour showed the respect in which she held them: the three together formed a very interesting group. We had expected to see the mother herself, but were disappointed; the reason of her not being visible was not founded in etiquette, but, sad to relate, because she had no raiment to appear before us with decency! and this the wife of the gallant Zefir Bey, the first noble in the country. Osman, whom we sent with our respects to her, returned to us with tears in his eyes, and drew a lamentable picture of the misery in which he had found her, having neither bedclothes nor counterpane, nor, in short, any furniture in her cabin but a mat: still a noble-looking creature, he said, and every inch a princess, though in rags. We were not a little shocked at this account, the more so that we had ourselves, since our arrival, sent her some considerable supplies from our stock of merchandise. We were informed, too, that many other persons had been equally kind to her, but she also had the mania of present-making, so common in this

country, and in this manner had squandered away all she possessed. Could we blame her, on the other hand, for applying our gifts to purposes the most congenial to her former habits, sensible as we were that her distress was of a nature which all we could bestow would do little to alleviate? In the paroxysms succeeding to her long fits of abstraction, she would passionately call on her absent husband; we had conceived, therefore, that the intelligence we could give her with respect to Zefir Bey was the most soothing cordial that could be offered her. Old Osman, who being, like herself, of Tartar extraction, had some degree of influence over her, had, by enlarging on this topic, and by the prospects he indulged in of better times, succeeded, he thought, in raising her spirits; but towards evening she relapsed into her melancholy, and the sobbing and wailing audible in our apartment the whole night proved how hopeless the task of ministering "to a mind diseased." Her sorrows, like wounds after a vain attempt to stanch them, had gushed forth afresh, and were flowing more profusely than ever.

CHAPTER VI.

The plains of the Kuban—Vindication of the Circassians—Provinces of Circassia—Discourse with Pahukoi Bey, Prince of Zadoog—Exchange of presents.

THE next day had been fixed on for the *medjilis*, or council, and there was already a great concourse of persons in the neighbourhood, but a severe indisposition prevented my attending it. Mr. Bell, accompanied by his dragoman, was present; but though many speeches were made, and there was an abundance of *tatlu dil*, sweet tongue, or fine speeches, exchanged, Mansour having been very eloquent in the praise of Shamiz, and Shamiz having praised Mansour, and both of them having joined in bepraising us, the only result of the council had been, as far as I could understand, procrastination, on the double

plea that the people were still occupied with their harvests, and that it would be premature to adopt any decisive measures till the intelligence they expected daily from Constantinople had arrived. They had promised, at all events, to hold another council in a fortnight: in the mean while, they exhorted us to keep up our spirits, and were themselves at great pains to devise *jeimbeusts*, or pastimes, for us. The subject, I was told, was gravely debated in council; and some of their suggestions, I confess, appeared to me more considerate than delicate. But one of their plans, which was that we should take a ramble with some of the principal chiefs towards the Kuban, we embraced very willingly, and started accordingly the next day in a northerly direction.

A diary of our excursion over the plains of the Kuban would be uninteresting. Our progress was slow, for we only rode four or five hours in the course of a day, and the exercise we took scarce sufficed for the digestion of the good things with which we were, in spite of ourselves, surfeited night and morning. This was by far the most arduous achievement of the expedition; for, in addition to this regular repletion, we had a great deal of feasting extraordinary to undergo, it happening to be harvest time, which is every-

where a period of merry-making. It is the custom for every one, when his corn or millet is ready for cutting, to call in his neighbours, who make quick work of it for him, he feasting them abundantly the while in return: so that, wherever we came, we were compelled to partake of the good cheer, and there was no escape from it, since the revellers no sooner perceived us, than they despatched a party to make prisoners of us, and we had no alternative but to sit down, with what appetites we might, to piles of beef, mutton, cakes, and poultry, and to quaff the capacious bowls of boza that were offered us. Indeed, but for the timely assistance of my red-nosed squire Osman, who never refused an extra pull at the boza on my account, I should have been not a little distressed. As it was, both Mr. Bell and myself had good reason to envy the digestive powers of our rustic friends, the "*dura messorum ilia*," who experienced no sort of inconvenience in this way. Though the people here are habitually and by choice abstemious, I have ever found them to do ample justice to the good cheer that is set before them. On taking leave of these reapers, they would go through a ceremony, which struck me as pleasing, though somewhat theatrical. They would all, men and women, seize their implements of husbandry, and

as we defiled by them, firing our rifles by way of farewell, proceed with their work, singing in chorus, and keeping time and step with their feet and sickles.

The lowlands between the mountains and Kuban can scarcely be called level; yet, though a good deal broken, they have an open and champaign aspect.

As we approached the river, it appeared to fall more and more out of cultivation. Haras and herds of cattle might be seen in this dangerous neighbourhood, but there were no enclosures. Still the land was in many places covered with dwarf oaks, and innumerable shrubs attested its fertility. We came at length to a rising ground that commanded a near view of the Kuban: we were at a distance of two to three miles from it, and could plainly distinguish its peculiarities. It is to be traced, as it sweeps to the south-west, by a verdant border of trees on either bank, and beyond this, by a deep fringe of reeds, in some places more than two miles in breadth. It is indebted for this latter accessory to the annual floods consequent on the thaw; and when the stream is frozen over in the winter, or when fordable during the autumnal drought, being no longer fed from the mountains, this forest of reeds becomes a vast receptacle for lurking bands

of marauders, who sally from it in the night to plunder the nearest farms and villages.

The chain of forts, which have been carried along the right bank of the Kuban, affords no security against small parties like these. They easily slip between them, and it is only when the Circassians pass openly in shoals for a foray, that the net extended for them is at all available.

These forts, ranged as far as the eye could follow along the opposite heights, made certainly a formidable show. We could also distinguish a large fortress—I have forgotten the name they gave it—in the distance. This, together with the towers we saw, was in the long strip of land, or delta, formed by the two mouths of the Kuban. The garrisons, we were told, consisted chiefly of Cossacks, who, when an inroad is made, after killing and wounding as many of the invaders as they can by the cross fire of the castles, give the alarm along the border, and assemble in force to intercept them and their spoil on their return. But expeditions on a scale like this are of rare occurrence, and undertaken as much with a view to devastation as plunder, and in order to retaliate for the ravages committed by the Russian armies in their territory. The favourite mode of carrying on the war is in flying parties, seldom exceeding fifty warriors, and advancing

and retreating with a celerity that baffles alike precaution or pursuit. Mansour himself had lately headed one of these incursions, and had returned with a large drove of cattle and several horses. One of the latter, which had evidently belonged to a Russian officer, I remembered having been pointed out to me with great glee by the boy Sheretluk, who had formed one of the party, and in the division of the spoil had been awarded for his share a fourth part of the charger in question, which was to be sold for the benefit of all it might concern.

I must confess that what I now beheld as to the measures taken for the security of the border seemed strongly to confirm all I had previously heard of the predatory habits of the Circassians, and which had been urged by the Russians in justification of their exterminating warfare. Forcibly struck with this idea, I at once appealed to Mansour, who was riding by my side, as to the justice of these charges. The chieftain neither felt nor affected surprise at my question. It was one for which, like Roderic Dhu in the romance, he was seemingly well prepared. He only shook his head, and smiled grimly as he answered, "My beard is not yet white, still do I remember the day when, instead of yonder castles, there was nothing on the opposite bank but the huts of the

Nogais—a people whose customs and religion were in unison with our own—with whom we could trade, associate, and war, it might be, all on a neighbourly footing, as we would do among ourselves; but these the Muscovites chased from their rightful homes, driving some of them across the Kuban, where they found refuge among ourselves, and the rest to the devil or Krim Tartary. In their place they established these Cossacks—*giaours* like themselves—and whose way of life is to us an abomination. Between them and ourselves of course there can be small sympathy, and God knows we have ever held them cheap as enemies. Nor, indeed, in former times, had we much more respect for the Muscovites their master. Times, however, are changed, and we are not so blind but that we can clearly perceive that their power and resources have been mightily multiplied—that they have cannon, horse, and infantry, countless as the leaves at midsummer—and we are therefore very well disposed, would they leave us to ourselves, to remain at peace with them. It is true that, while they continue to wage war on us, we will do our best to requite them—we are not women or bond-slaves, to be trampled on with impunity. When they say, therefore, (liars as they are,) that we will not remain at peace with them, it must be

with a view of justifying their own barbarity. What should prevent us from so doing, more than the provinces of Zadoog, Kerkenai, Attukor, Damegoi, and Makoish, all of which, though living on their frontier like ourselves, giving no hostages, and admitting no Russians among them, have nevertheless, on the faith of treaties, been at peace with them for the last seven years?"

These arguments of Mansour I believe to be as unanswerable as the facts he adduced are incontrovertible. The cruel measure adopted against the Nogai Tartars took place in 1792, during the reign of Catherine II. It is not less true, that if the pacification of the belligerent provinces were all that was aimed at by Russia, it might easily be effected on the conditions she has accorded to those enumerated by Mansour.

Before I left the country, however, the motives for prosecuting this unrighteous war became sufficiently palpable, being, like the rest of her policy, purely aggressive; for in the course of the same year she was the first to violate the convention she had made with the Kuban provinces, for no other reason that I am aware of than that it no longer suited her purpose to observe it.

We passed that night at a farm situated in a wood close to the Kuban, and we were reminded by more than one circumstance of the vicinity of an enemy.

We were under the necessity of sleeping on mats, for there were neither coverlids nor furniture of any sort in the house, as the inmates were unwilling, in the event of a night attack, which was always to be apprehended, to be encumbered with them in their flight. In the farmyard, too, we met many signs of the instability of everything upon the border. Among the live stock were many curious specimens, which, however much they might tend to improve the breed there, had evidently not been reared in Circassia. There were also many uncouth-looking bipeds, who, it was equally clear, had not been born on that side of the Kuban—some of them fugitives, and others transferred thither by force, all of them, however, apparently well satisfied with their change of masters. As we were desirous of clearly ascertaining this point, our host, at our particular request, said he would make a trial for us. Having summoned one of them to our presence, he told him that as an exchange of prisoners would shortly take place, he had some thoughts of sending him back to his countrymen. The bare idea of such a calamity seemed at first to deprive him of his senses, after which, falling at his master's feet, he implored him not to send him back to Russia: "Rather than do so," he said, "use me

as your dog—beat me, tie me up, and give me your bones to pick.”

It was some time before his master could succeed in pacifying and persuading him that he had spoken in jest; and when he had done so, the ecstasies into which the poor wretch fell—his capering, shouting, and ridiculous antics—were, in the eyes of the Circassians, whose manners are invariably sedate and dignified, at least as disgusting as his previous terror. The exhibition, however, was highly useful. It assuredly served to strengthen their dislike for institutions under which such miserable yahoos are formed and oppressed. Indeed the general experience they have had of Russian prisoners and deserters has in every way tended to confirm their abhorrence of the government which would reduce them to the same level.

It is true, nevertheless, that there is a species of serfage in the Caucasus, but existing under conditions so mild and favourable to its members, that it can hardly be held in the same light here as elsewhere. Lands, tenements, and cattle are allotted to them, and they retain one half of the produce of these estates. They can also, when they please, demand to be transferred to other masters, and purchase, when they have the means, their own liberty. This class, it is probable,

originally consisted of prisoners of war, made in the contests between the tribes and provinces. But there are circumstances which, whatever honorary distinctions of class may exist between man and man, tend to establish a real equality among them. All are clothed, fed, and housed in the same manner; and, what is still more important, are on a par as to mental acquirements. In the labours of the field, the dangers of war, or the festivity of the guest-house, even the noble, though his rank be marked by certain ceremonious observances, is the constant associate of the serf; and the independent spirit that animates the one exists, I believe, in a scarcely less degree in the other.

From the Kuban we returned hastily to Semez, where our presence was required in consequence of the arrival of Pshukoi Bey, Prince of Zadoog, who had left his own province to visit us. But that the reader may better appreciate the character and position of an individual alike distinguished for his personal qualities and political consideration, it will be necessary to convey to him some idea of the province of Zadoog itself, accompanied by a cursory glance at the whole of the divisions, territorial as well as political, of Circassia. The different provinces of Circassia, after a few months' residence there had made me

acquainted with their various political relations, presented themselves to me under three grand and distinct aspects or divisions. Under the first of these may be classed those continually at war with Russia, comprising the whole of the coast from Sokoumkale to Anapa, of which the southern part is called Abbassa, and the northern included in the province of Natu-koitch—the remaining part of the latter province occupying the north-western angle of the country between the mountains and the Kuban—and to the east of this the province of Shapsook, extending also from the Kuban over a great part of the mountains, though not to the sea-coast. The populations of these districts amount, as nearly as I could ascertain, to 300,000, and furnish out of this number at least 50,000 well-armed and well-mounted warriors. The next division includes all the lowland and neutral provinces on the Kuban and its tributary, the Laba. Its united population is, I believe, as great as that of the belligerent districts. The causes and consequences of their neutrality I shall enter into presently. The third division is the great province of Abbassak, a mountainous region, placed in the centre of the others, and whose population, amounting to about 400,000, though avowedly hostile to Russia, are rarely, from their position, brought into collision

with her troops. From the above estimates it will be seen I rate the population of the whole of independent Circassia at about 10,000,000, out of which we may compute the adult males capable of bearing arms at 150,000. All speak the same language, at least with provincial differences in dialect as slight as are to be found in any other country of the world ; and whatever variety may originally have existed in the races, it has, by fusion, been long since obliterated. The castes, however, of Pshi, Vork, and Thlo-koftles, have been kept free from all intermixture.

To this enumeration of the Circassian provinces I might have added a fourth division, consisting of great and little Kabarda, situated on the Kuban and the Terek. These, however, are no longer perfectly independent, and, though retaining their arms, give hostages to Russia, and allow a free passage to her troops through their territory.

To revert to the neutral provinces on the Kuban and Laba, their distinguishing feature is, that they occupy the plains between these streams and the mountains. The consequence of that position is, that the inhabitants having no defiles or impregnable positions like those of Shapsook and Natu-koitch to retreat upon, but living, under their princes and pshas, in extensive vil-

lages on the plains, with the highlanders of Abbassak in their rear, they have been peculiarly obnoxious to the hostility of Russia, and, after a long and sanguinary struggle, compelled to make peace, and remain neutral in the war which she still prosecuted against their neighbours. These concessions on their part at first greatly excited the indignation of the latter, who, to punish them, attacked and plundered their territory on all sides, and thus, in their own defence, they were for some time obliged to make common cause with the Russians, to whom such a consummation could not fail to give peculiar satisfaction. The Circassians, however, became soon aware of this mistake, and subsequently acquiesced in the neutrality of their brethren, all whose sympathies, if allowed fair play, they knew would be enlisted in their favour, since it was easy to foresee, that if they were subjugated, the neutrality observed by those provinces in the interior would by no means preserve their neck from the yoke. These anticipations were fully confirmed by the result, for the progress of the struggle was thenceforward watched by the neutrals with an interest commensurate with their own stake in it, while from the first they eagerly participated in the hopes that were entertained of England's intervention, desiring no better

than to be included in a general scheme of pacification under her auspices. What had since been accomplished to this end by the national emissary, Sefir Bey—the communication said to have come from Lord Ponsonby—and, lastly, the bodily presence of two Englishmen in Circassia, had served more and more to inflame the spirit of resistance already kindled there, and which it now required little more to fan into open hostility.

Of these provinces, the most contiguous to the part of the country where we resided was Zadoog, being not only bounded like the rest to the south by the mountains of Abbassak, but by Shapsook, with which it is conterminous to the west. With the chief personage, or prince of Zadoog, Pshukoi Bey, we had been in correspondence almost from our first coming, having sent him by a secret messenger, at the instance of Keri Oglou, some trifling presents. He had been represented to us as a brave and patriotic prince, compelled by circumstances to temporise and keep on terms with the Russians, living almost under the cannon of Ekaterinodar, but exerting himself at the same time to promote the interests of his struggling compatriots, by conveying to them, as occasion served, the most valuable information respecting

the movements of the enemy. He was known even to have joined in person the forays of the people of Shapsook, masked, as had formerly been the custom of Circassian princes, in certain periodical saturnalia.* These escapades had more than once involved him in difficulties with the Russians, by whom he had been seized and confined several months at Ekaterinodar; but he continued, on the whole, to keep up appearances with them, pretending to favour their commercial projects and political intrigues. Desirous of informing himself, by a personal interview, of our real objects in visiting Circassia, he had obtained permission of General Zass to repair to Natukoitch, under promise of communicating to him all he should learn on the subject; for the Russians were persuaded, at least as strongly as the Circassians themselves, that we were emissaries of the British government, and viewed our residence in the country with no little anxiety.

It was evident to us, from the note of preparation by which he was heralded, that the visit of Pshukoi was considered an event of some magnitude. There were gatherings to greet him

* Pshukoi Bey died before I left Circassia; I should otherwise have not spoken so explicitly on matters that might have compromised him.

wherever he came, and by the time he had reached our konac, the tail or cavalcade he had collected behind him in his progress was such as could scarcely be contained in our glen. He was preceded into our apartment by a crowd of the most distinguished individuals of the province, who ranged themselves with great solemnity at the further end of it. He was then ushered into our presence by our host, and having resigned his weapons, consisting of bow, quiver, &c., to his squire, and exchanged salutations with the most bland and measured courtesy, he took his seat on a mat and cushion, which had been prepared for him on the right of Mr. Bell. A couch is a luxury in which no Circassian, however high his rank, indulges in the daytime, though offered invariably to us as strangers. The icy stillness demanded on a first interview by our dignity, and broken only by some occasional compliments, gave us leisure for a scrutiny which proved on the whole highly favourable to our guest. Though his manners and dress were strictly national, there was about his appearance less of the fierce rusticity that characterises the people of the mountains—a milder and more civilised look, which, to go into detail, was owing partly to the shawl wreathed over the shaggy calpack, and the absence on his chin of the grim appur-

tenance that shaded the faces of the rest. Like Indar Oglou, he wore only a slight moustache, and his handsome and regular features bespoke him politic as he was valiant. In short, he was a true type of the Circassian cavalier: one which I had been frequently assured by the natives themselves is nowhere to be found in perfection at present but on the plains of the Kuban. He was distinguished by the lordly air acquired only by long habits of the authority which the progress of democracy in the mountains has tended in great measure to banish from them. He had a numerous suite of squires and pages, who approached him with great deference; and he was also attended by a functionary, whom I had not observed in the train of any other prince—a scribe or secretary, wearing a huge turban on his head, and writing apparatus instead of a dagger at his girdle. He was esteemed a man of great erudition and a famous linguist, being familiar, in addition to his oriental lore, with the Russian language.

In the evening, when the numerous cortège of the prince had dispersed for the night in the neighbouring hamlets, he took the opportunity of unbosoming himself to us, speaking in the most unreserved manner of the difficulties of his position, suspected as he was by his countrymen,

on the one hand,—menaced and coerced by the Russians, on the other. Of the ulterior views of the latter, embracing nothing less than the conquest of the whole country, nobody, he assured us, could be better convinced than himself. He knew it to be the interest of the people of his province to join heart and hand with those of Shapsook and Natu-koitch in arresting the progress of the invader. But exposed as it was to his inroads, they had no alternative but to remain quiet spectators of the cruel warfare carried on against their neighbours. Could they, however, be assured of a retreat, in case of need, among the mountains of Abbassak, they would at once subscribe to the league, and never consent to a peace with the Russians, unless every tribe and province of Circassia were included in it. He was not without hopes, in the mean while, that an arrangement securing them an asylum might be concluded with the people of Abbassak; and such a convention, he added, he had no doubt would be greatly facilitated, if we ourselves would visit that province, and use the same influence there as we had exerted with the people of these districts, and which, as regarded the healing of feuds and dissensions, he knew to have been most salutary. On the great benefit we had conferred upon Circassia by our visit, and

the encouragement the people had everywhere derived from it, he expatiated at great length. "Whether," said he, "as is reported, you have been specially commissioned by your government, or, as yourselves assert, have come here as volunteers and friends to the cause, or what foundation my countrymen may have for their hopes in England's intervention, I do not, I confess, distinctly understand; what I do know is, that at present this forms their only chance of salvation, and that to omit any means of obtaining it would be unpardonable negligence on our part.

"What we have hitherto done towards it is nothing; we should send ambassadors not only to Stamboul, but to London. This was the course adopted by the Mamelukes when the French invaded Egypt. Two of them took ship and sailed directly to England, and, by their energetic representations, at once obtained assistance. This is what we should do now; how can we expect succour if we do not seek it? 'the babe is not given to the babe that cries not for it.' So convinced, indeed, am I of the necessity of this mission, that I will, if necessary, undertake it myself, alleging to the Russians, as a pretext for my absence, a visit to my relatives at Constantinople."

This discourse of Pshukoi, and all we subsequently heard from him, tended to convince us of

his good sense and patriotism. As regarded ourselves and our supposed connexion with our government, we begged him once for all to believe, that whatever interest we might take in their affairs, it was simply as private individuals ; any influence we possessed with them as such, we would willingly exert for the public good ; and we desired no better than to set out immediately to Abbassak, for the furtherance of the objects he had recommended, but unfortunately it did not entirely depend upon ourselves where we should go ; and from whatever cause it might have arisen, suspicion or jealousy, it was evident our liberty had been greatly restricted ever since our arrival. Pshukoi at once declared such conduct on the part of his countrymen to be absurd and unjustifiable, and promised to read them a lecture on the subject before his departure.

That evening the prince not only supped, but, agreeably to the custom of illustrious persons, when they meet here, slept under the same roof with us. He had no sooner betaken himself to bed, than his secretary, who had been on thorns to have some private confabulation with us, came and seated himself near the couch of Mr. Bell. He was a great linguist, as I have remarked ; and although the hour was very late, he declared he would add English to the stock of his acquire-

ments that very night. It was more than I, for my part, would engage to teach him, but Mr. Bell good-naturedly undertook to give him some insight into our literature, and they had already got far into the alphabet before I fell asleep.

Our levee the next morning was, as usual thronged at a very early hour, and prevented the renewal of any confidential conversation with Pshukoi; but he took our host Shamiz aside, and had a long talk with him under the trees outside, repeating all he had said to us the day before, and expostulating with him on the invidious conduct and illiberal spirit of the people of Natu-koitch, by whom we were kept absolutely doing nothing in their province, when our presence might be productive of so much good elsewhere. His observations seemed, on the whole, to have made some impression, as they were afterwards reported to us by our host himself.

Before he took leave of us, which was after dinner, we each of us made Pshukoi a present, Mr. Bell giving him an English double-barrelled fowling-piece, and I a Turkish bow. Having made us his acknowledgments, he rose and very quietly pulled off his great coat, begging that Mr. Bell would accept of it as a souvenir; and then turning to me and apologising for having nothing better to offer, handed over his em-

broidered leggings or continuations. His tunic, though of coarse country frieze, was richly trimmed with silver-lace, and might be of the value of ten pounds. Mr. Bell gave his own, which was also a good one, in exchange for it; though according to strict etiquette, as it was afterwards laid down to me by my squire Osman, Pshukoi ought not to have accepted of it, but to have taken the very worst coat he could find on the backs of our household, and to have left Mr. Bell's in its place. I must at the same time observe, that Osman's own coat would in that case have stood a fair chance of promotion; still what he said as to the custom of the country was correct. When a prince pays a visit from one province to another, he is expected to go very gaily attired and return in the garb of a pauper.

The moment of departure being arrived, Pshukoi resumed his arms and advanced to take leave of us. His emotion, I could see, was deep as it was unaffected, and any latent suspicion arising from his mysterious conduct and equivocal position, was at once dispelled from our minds when, throwing aside his habitual reserve, he clasped each of us fervently, as the friends of Circassia, to his heart.

When he was gone, we found time to look at a letter which had been privately delivered to us by

Selim Bey, who had come in Pshukoi's suite. It had been addressed to us in the Turkish language by the chiefs and judges of Attukoi, the province of the Kuban to the east of Zadoog, and they vehemently besought in it the protection of our government.

CHAPTER VII.

Good news—Salt springs—Delays and disappointments—Skirmishing with the Russians—Mehmet Zazi Oglou—Preparations at Djouga—Nadir Bey, the Englishman.

WE were now in the middle of September, the harvest was over, and a fortnight had elapsed since the national council had been adjourned to Adheucum. We accordingly set out for that rendezvous, and having baited for the night at Asmuck, in the mountains, we pursued our way the next morning through a succession of romantic defiles, which, although no longer in their vernal dress, but in the more gorgeous one of autumn, I at once recognised as those I had threaded with so much delight on my first arrival.

At the house where we were quartered that day, we at length received news of a satisfactory

nature, relative to some vessels said lately to have come from Turkey, and with respect to which there had been the most contradictory reports. The man who conveyed us this intelligence, aware of its value to us, and turning our curiosity to the best account, sold it to our dragoman for three pieces of merchandise, deliverable upon its subsequent confirmation. It was to the effect, that Mehmet Zazi Oglou, one of the most considerable chiefs on the coast, had arrived from Constantinople with despatches for us, and that he was accompanied by an Englishman, a very great personage indeed—not the King of England himself, but his brother, with a prodigious quantity of arms and ammunition.

We at once perceived there was a prodigious quantity of nonsense in all this ; yet, if not quite so much elated by it as our friends, we sincerely rejoiced at the near prospect we at length had of some certain information from Constantinople. The medjilis, or council, which had been convened, was again, this time at least, for unobjectionable reasons, prorogued, though it assembled the next day at the sacred grove of Adhencum. The subject that absorbed all the attention of the elders was the arrivals on the coast, whither it was determined forthwith to depute some influential member of the council. The choice fell on

Shamiz, and it was agreed that my Greek servant Demetri should accompany him, in order to bring us our despatches. Having made these arrangements, the council was dissolved in the usual manner by the armed orator on horseback. From the animated volubility of his address, and the exultation with which it was responded to by the assembly, it was clear they imagined themselves on the eve of some great event. We had, however, a melancholy presentiment they were deceiving themselves. We were, at the conclusion of his address, warmly eulogised by the speaker, who exhorted us, to be of good cheer till the return of Shamiz. Our old acquaintance Attukor Bey then formally invited us, before the council, to spend the interval at his house, and, though we had not forgotten his former meanness, we accepted the invitation. The entertainment we received there was, as before, of superior style, while his importunity afforded us at least as much amusement as disgust.

We also spent a night at the house of his brother, whose character was fully as noble as his was contemptible, and who had purposely refrained from visiting us, that his motives might not be misconstrued. We at length returned to Semez by the plain of Anaym. On the way we were shown some salt springs, which Mr. Bell in

particular was anxious to see, in order to ascertain if salt, which, on account of the blockade, is so great a desideratum here, might not be obtained from them by *evaporation*. Such as we saw, though certainly saline, were very slightly impregnated; therefore valuable only inasmuch as they indicated the probable presence of salt beneath, which, with the necessary tools, might possibly be excavated. While we were examining one of these springs, we were advised of the approach of a numerous party of horsemen, and we immediately mounted and advanced to meet them. It turned out to be Pshukoi Bey, escorted by a large body of the chiefs of Natukoitch, on his return to his own province.

The customary firing and skirmishing was kept up as we drew near each other; but when at length we came to a halt, we had some difficulty in recognising our guest of a few days before, so much, as regarded his outer man, was he altered for the worse. The tunic of Mr. Bell, in which he was dressed when he left us, had been replaced, after heaven knows how many intermediate changes for the worse, by one whose "looped and windowed raggedness" left nothing further, even in Osman's opinion, to wish for. *En revanche*, he was followed by a string of at least thirty led horses, presents from his friends. As he again

desired to converse with us in private, our followers on either side withdrew to some distance, leaving us alone with him, and Selim Bey for interpreter. He then inquired anxiously if we had received any intelligence; and when we had told him what we knew, begged we would keep him from time to time informed of all that passed. He also repeated his advice that we should go to Abbassak, to promote by our councils a confederation between its inhabitants and those of the Kuban provinces. Having earnestly, and at some length, impressed these things on our minds, he once more embraced and finally parted from us.

Our route, as I said before, lay over the plain of Anapa. We found there, not far from the hills to the south, a large slab of white marble, richly carved with flowers in relievo. It was several feet high, and, though sunk perpendicularly in the ground, had been originally, it seemed, part of the frieze or architrave of a building, of which, however, there was not the slightest vestige besides in the neighbourhood. After gazing on this object for some time, and vainly speculating how it could have come in that desert spot, we rode on at a brisker pace, for night was falling around us, over the plain. The beaten track we were pursuing was that by

which the Russians pass from the island of Tamaan to Anapa. This, though it keeps as near to the coast and as clear of the hills as possible, is, at the best, a very insecure thoroughfare for them; and the strong convoys of infantry or Cossacks that come by it, trust rather to despatch than to their prowess for a safe passage: the Tcherkess,* making good his name, too often successfully disputes it with them. Thus, if they have made a solitude of this part of the country, they can scarcely call it peace. The Circassians no longer inhabit, but lord it there as much as ever, and our party now defiled along the Russian road leisurely and two abreast, their arms gleaming in the moonlight, the measured tramp of their horses, with the wild melody of their war-song, breaking fearlessly the stillness of the surrounding waste.

We reached the house of Shupash, at Tchowalloz, at a late hour, and the next morning regained our abode at Semez. It was a week since Shamiz had set out for the south with Demetri, and we calculated another week would elapse before their return, to which, I must confess, we looked forward with some impatience, tantalized as we were every day by fresh rumours

* Tcherkees, which is a Tartar word, means literally one who intercepts the road of another.

with respect to the illustrious stranger who had arrived on the coast.

At length, on the evening of the seventh day, we were overjoyed to see the old Ouzden and my Greek come trotting up the glen, and made sure that we should be at length relieved from our suspense. What was our mortification, then, to learn they had been no further than Pchat, where they had met a brother of Zazi Oglou, the chieftain who had brought our despatches from Constantinople, and who was the Konac Bey of the Englishman we had heard so much of. The latter was still at Ouwya, where he had originally landed, and it was true, they stated, had brought with him several chests of gunpowder. Our despatches, they added, would be delivered to us by Zazi Oglou in person ; but when we were to expect him or them was by no means certain, nor indeed, in the opinion of our friends, was that a point of the least importance. Their coolness in this respect was most provoking. Of that which we call business, or of despatch, which is its soul, they seem to have no idea whatever ; and after all, perhaps, considering the nature of their administration, or rather absence of all administration, we ought not to feel surprised at it. The services of all employed in it being gratuitous, punctuality and despatch are out of the

question; for though religion, patriotism, and public spirit, are powerful influences, and frequently induce the greatest sacrifices, they are not those which usually prompt to immediate exertion, or busy themselves with detail. More vulgar incentives are required to cause men to bestir themselves, or, to use a homely adage peculiarly applicable to this country, "to make the mare to go."

Of this I am now an almost literal illustration; for having expressed my intention of proceeding myself to the south, and desired the escort of some chieftain on the way, almost everybody at first declared his horse to be out of condition; but upon backing my request with a backshich of some pieces of merchandise, every horse recovered his legs as if by miracle, and I had a cavalier at my orders immediately. I took, therefore, for my companion Ali Bey, the sturdy Colossus of the lake; and bidding farewell for the time to Mr. Bell, we made the best of our way to the south. We were attended each of us by our squires; mine on this occasion was Kutchuk, the son of Osman, my regular Djeraah. He was a cunning and impudent varlet, and, though smart and useful in his way, a bad substitute for his father.

It is not my intention to dwell very minutely

on this journey, but to confine myself to the principal incidents. After a wearisome ride the first day through deep and shadowy defiles, we discovered at nightfall that we had lost our way. A short consultation took place among my companions with respect to the bearings presented by the stars and the tops of the surrounding hills, and we then pushed on through the woods in pitch darkness, hustling ever and anon against the trees, scrambling up one precipice and plunging down another. Our horses, gifted with similar powers of vision and surefootedness, made their way like cats, and at length, after slipping rather than walking down the side of a hill apparently all but perpendicular, and which I shuddered the next morning to look at, they deposited us safely in the midst of a considerable hamlet at the bottom. We were immediately assailed by a fierce troop of shepherd and house dogs, barking and leaping upon our horses. Dark as it was, however, I soon discovered where we were, and the sound of a waterfall hard by us, and presently the shrill voice of my Greek left me no doubt that we were in the house where I had left my merchandise. Our horses were too fatigued to go on the next day, which was lost in hiring others. On the following morning we pursued our journey, taking, as we issued from

the hamlet, a less break-neck path than that by which we had come.

We travelled by the road recently constructed by the Russians as far as Pchat, whence it took us four hours to reach Shapseen, a distance which, judging from the traces of their encampments, the Russians had performed in just as many days. Yet the route was comparatively easy, lying for the most part through spacious and open valleys, and presenting only one point where a successful stand could be made, and which, indeed, as was evident from the shattered condition of the trees, had not been overlooked by the inhabitants. As we drew near Shapseen, where the Russians, though they had completed their fort, were still encamped, the loud crash attending the discharge of grape-shot—a sound now grown familiar to me—was borne heavily every now and then on the breeze, awaking the echoes of the hills on either side of us. We came soon afterwards on the scene of conflict. A column of Russians about two thousand strong had that morning left their entrenchments on a foraging excursion. At a league's distance from them they had come to a large meadow, and while part of the soldiers were employed in cutting the grass, their tirailleurs had been thrown forward among the trees and bushes to protect them.

The ground, though somewhat broken, and here and there slightly wooded, afforded little advantage to the Abbassian marksmen, who, nevertheless hovered about the enemy in every direction, crouching in their leafy coverts, and singling out their victims with the most deadly precision.

The place from which the fire had been most sustained and effective, was a deserted farmhouse, which the Russians, having previously scoured the gardens with repeated volleys of grape and musketry, found it necessary to attack and set fire to. The flames were yet curling round the black and broken roof-tree as we rode up to it. Otherwise, the spot that had just before been so fiercely contested, wore the air of a deep and romantic solitude common to the whole landscape, for it was now completely abandoned by the combatants on both sides.

The Russian column might still be partially seen in the distance, retreating with its team of wagons, which carried, together with the fodder they had cut, their killed and wounded. As to the Circassians, we had already met on our way large straggling troops of them dispersing after their day's work in the adjacent hamlets. They appeared in general more fatigued than excited, for the Russian army having been now upwards of six weeks at Shapseen, they had been engaged

in constant skirmishes with it. The latter had at first displayed much more daring, venturing even into some of the defiles; but the severe check which they had received from the Hadji Gus-beg, and to which I have before alluded, had taught them great caution. Gus-beg himself was no longer at Shapseen, having retired soon after his brilliant exploit there. Indeed he seldom remained long in one place, blazing about the country like a meteor, or paladin of old. The only chief of note here now was Basten Oglou Shimaf, our neighbour of Semez. The people of the district had been left almost entirely to their own resources, amounting to about five hundred rifles.

A little further on we came to the place, a sort of natural alcove in the woods, where Shimaf was bivouacked with some cavaliers from Abbassak. He had been, he told me, to visit our countryman who had newly arrived on the coast at Ouwya; but he could give me no satisfactory particulars with respect to him. He believed, however, though a very great personage, he was not the king of England's brother, but the son of the English Capitan Pasha. Shimaf and his comrades having agreed to join my escort, we proceeded in a body to Djouga.

It was not more than a fortnight that William-anoff, having completed the fortress at Shapseen,

had threatened to march upon Djouga, which is about sixteen miles distance to the south ; but he had since hesitated to fulfil his threat, and as we now advanced along the road, if road it might be called where there was nothing but an intricate bridle-way among the crags and forests, I could not but tacitly approve of his delay. It was, in short, a path altogether impracticable for artillery, and this arm he could not possibly dispense with in his Circassian campaigns. In one place near Djouga, cresting a wooded eminence for about a quarter of a mile, was a double rampart composed of immense stones flat and upright, in which nature had so well counterfeited art, as to impose on the natives the belief of its being Geneviz, that is, the remains of an old Genoese castle. But on close inspection it turned out to be only the projecting pieces of a vertical stratification of schistus. We at length descended through a gradual shelving valley, opening to the sea, in a beautifully wooded cave. This was separated by a tongue of land from Djouga, and we here discovered a young warrior wrapped in his cloak, and reposing by a watch-fire. He was a tall handsome stripling, and proved to be one of the Zazi Oglous, of which family there are five brothers : he had been stationed here to give the alarm if the Russians, from whom an attack

was hourly apprehended, should put to sea. The promontory by which it was screened precluded the possibility of a look-out from Djouga: but from this cove the whole of the coast to the north was visible as far as Pchat.

Advancing over the pebbly beach, we turned the point and reached the bay of Djouga. I at once appreciated the advantages which concur to render it all but impregnable, and which serve here instead of regular fortifications. The grove of stately trees, or kodosh, dedicated to the rites of their ancient religion, and extending its ranks over the whole front of the bay, presents a curtain at least as impenetrable as that of a Russian fort, and distributes a fire not less destructive from the rifles which lurk behind every tree. Nor is the valley behind, should their defences be carried, at all inviting to the invader, being regularly walled in and commanded by the hills on every side, and forming altogether, when garrisoned by the retainers of the Zazi Oglou, a retreat into which few, with hostile intentions, would be ill-advised enough to intrude. But it is not on his own people alone that the chieftain depends for its protection. The hardy mountaineers of Abbassak, with whom he is in league, are close behind, and at his beck whenever he has occasion for them.

Mehmet, who had been on a voyage to Turkey, and had been accompanied on his return by an Englishman, having left his protégé in the care of Ali Bey, his second brother, at Ouwya, had, on hearing of its being in danger, flown to the defence of his stronghold. This was not the first time that it had been threatened with an attack from the Russians, or that he had had to prepare for them. They had paid him a visit there at his special invitation three years before. The circumstances attending it were equally curious and characteristic.

The Zazi Oglou family, though belonging to the class of Ouzdens, and indirectly connected with the tribe of Chipakow, had, under the direction of Mehmet, engaged extensively in commercial pursuits, consisting chiefly in the exportation of women for the harems of Turkey. But although this had been held derogatory to their rank, and they had in consequence of it fallen considerably in public estimation, their power in their own valley had nevertheless kept pace with their wealth, which, like that of the Indar Oglous at Pchat, had been excited chiefly for the purposes of monopoly; nor had it become in other respects oppressive, since all who felt it so were at liberty to remove from the sphere of its influence. Mehmet I discovered to be an odd compound of th

noble and the trader, artful as he was haughty. Nobody, during his voyages to Constantinople, for he always accompanied his wares thither in person, could sink his dignity, or recollect it so well when it suited his purpose, as Mehmet. As an instance of this, I may adduce the circumstance of my meeting him in a steamer on the Bosphorus subsequently to my quitting Circassia, when I found it difficult to identify the warrior chief whom I had seen rallying his clansmen on his native hills, with the fawning fellow who then begged my influence with the English captain to obtain him a free passage to Trebisonde, promising to give no trouble, but to creep into any hole or cupboard that might be allotted to him.

It was in one of these trips that Mehmet had the misfortune to be captured by a Russian cruiser: his ship and cargo were confiscated, and he was himself detained prisoner in the Crimea—circumstances involving losses and interruption in business equally vexatious to the assiduous trader. But fortune had not yet completely deserted him, and by one of the freaks she occasionally indulges in, raised for him a deliverer in the person of the Russian governor, by inspiring that sagacious functionary with the project of converting the chieftain he had caught into an instrument of his political designs, in the same

manner as wild animals, it is well known, may not only be tamed themselves, but trained to inveigle others.

Mehmet was accordingly summoned to his presence, and much rhetoric was resorted to in order to prove to him the folly his countrymen were guilty of in contending with Russia in war, and the great advantages they might derive from commercial relations with her—rhetoric to which Mehmet, apparently a weaker logician, was at length fain to surrender at discretion ; nor did he stop even there, but with the zeal of a convert to these ideas, and the schemes arising from them, pointed out facilities for their realization which even the Count had not reckoned upon, showing most satisfactorily that, for this purpose, his own port of Djouga was the most favourably situated of any on the coast. The Count, enchanted at these hopeful dispositions, proposed there and then to set his prisoner at liberty, that he might without further delay co-operate with him in the execution of projects of such paramount importance. He also promised, that when apprized of everything being in readiness for its reception, he would fit out an expedition for that place. But Mehmet, though it was natural to suppose he would have jumped at the offer, made, nevertheless, some demur about it, express-

ing to the Count his fears that the arguments he had used, powerful as they undoubtedly were, would not prove as satisfactory to his countrymen as they had been to himself. Others, he thought, would be necessary—arguments of a different stamp, which the loss he had lately sustained from the confiscation of his property, had now put it out of his power to employ with them.

These difficulties, however, having been surmounted by the liberality of Count Woronzow, Mehmet was liberated as soon as possible at Ekaterinodar. No sooner had he returned to his native valley of Djouga, where all were as delighted to see him as he was to see himself there, than he summoned the *Memleket* to a council, and, to the infinite amusement of the greybeards of which it was composed, laid before it the ingenious rigmarole of Count Woronzow, suppressing at the same time all mention of the peculiar arguments he had himself suggested. He then told them that the Muscovite might certainly be ere long expected at Djouga, and that they should lose no time in preparing for him; and in order that nothing should be omitted on their part, which might add to the warmth of his reception, he recommended that the lads of Abbassak (not forgetting to bring their rifles

with them) should be invited to the festival; and that in the mean while they should take good care "to keep their own powder dry."

Many months had elapsed, but no tidings had been received by Count Woronzow from his friend Mehmet; and, wearied at length of waiting, he despatched a powerful expedition to Djouga, for the purpose either of reminding him of his engagement, or punishing him for the breach of it. But the Zazi Oglous and their followers were on the alert, and by their numbers, swelled by strong reinforcements from Abbassak, they kept the invaders gallantly at bay for upwards of a week, till the latter, unable to maintain themselves longer in the valley, retreated to their ships, and set sail, "*infectâ re*" to the Crimea.

On our arrival at his head-quarters, which was behind the sacred grove in front of the bay, we found Mehmet and his brother busied in their preparations against another attack from the invaders. Among other means of defence, they prided themselves chiefly on some heavy pieces of Turkish ordnance, which I was convinced, however, they would be unable to make use of.

I was received very politely, notwithstanding the bustle in which I found him, by Mehmet, but was much mortified to learn that he had left my

despatches, with the rest of his effects, at Ouwya. The Englishman who had accompanied him from Samsoun, and whom he called Nadir Bey, was at the same place. My curiosity with respect to him, Mehmet either could not or would not gratify any further. Whatever falsehoods he might have told on the subject to his countrymen, it was of no use, he candidly admitted, attempting to deceive me. I discovered, however, that the individual, whoever he might be, had been placed since his arrival in no agreeable predicament. The part of the coast where he had been compelled to land by the close pursuit of the Russian cruisers, was notorious for the lawless character of its inhabitants. They had at first, it appeared, been with difficulty restrained from laying hands on his property, consisting in great measure of lead and gunpowder, which he had brought with him to distribute as he should think proper among the chiefs; but on which the people of Ouwya, not wishing it to go any further, had put an embargo. Messengers having in consequence been despatched in every direction by the Zazi Oglous, an imposing force had collected from Abbassak and the south, as far as Soukoum, to defeat these nefarious designs. In the midst of these annoyances, Nadir Bey had also been suffering under a

severe attack of ague. I felt anxious, therefore, to join him as soon as possible, and assist, as far as lay in my power, in extricating him from his difficulties.

CHAPTER VIII.

Retreat of the Russians—Gathering of the Circassians—Attempts of the Russians to intercept Nadir Bey—Bad news—Our Proclamation.

EARLY the next morning, the scouts who had been stationed on the hills brought the welcome intelligence that the Russian army had raised its camp at Shapseen, and was in full retreat to Pchat. Mehmet had himself hastened to the summit of the nearest mountain, and satisfied himself with his telescope of the truth of the report. Relieved, therefore, from all apprehensions of an advance or descent upon Djouga, for that year at least, he intimated his intention of joining us a few days afterwards at Ouwya. We ourselves set forward the next morning on a journey which it took us three days more to

complete, and which proved for the most part anything but agreeable. The road was confined to a scanty strip of beach between the cliffs and the sea. The stones, shingle, and seaweed, with which it was paved, made it a sad penance for our unshod horses to travel by, while huge fragments of rock rendered it in some places wholly impassable. I was in some measure consoled in this toilsome journey by the reflection that there was no inland thoroughfare for a Russian army to advance by. Occasionally, too, we came to a cleft in the craggy wall, serving as an outlet to the mountain torrent, and affording a transient glimpse of the fairy landscape within. Wherever, also, the grateful spring of fresh water gushed through the rocks, the fountain and bowl, rude as they were, indicated that Islamism (compromised, it is true, by Pagan rites) had extended its sway over the land of our pilgrimage.

We passed on our journey two very considerable bays, Shapsooka and Taopsa, in both of which the Russians have since erected castles. The former was scarcely at a mile and a half's distance from Djouga; and, in consequence of the superior facility it presented for an attack, was occupied in preference to that place. At Taopsa, about fifty miles further south, we found two Turkish vessels which had been dragged on shore there. They

had not been completely screened, however, and had been detected a few days before by a Russian frigate and steamer, which, without venturing to disembark their men, had cannonaded them from the sea. Some damage had been done to their rigging, but the hulls had been very slightly injured, yet the valley was everywhere ploughed up in front by the shot. It was by one of these vessels that Sheriff Agha, the Turkish merchant who had proposed to accompany me from Sinope, had at length mustered courage to transport himself. I found him at the house where I was to lodge for the night, cracking his jokes in a ring of Circassians, among whom he was a general favourite. He was as fat and as merry as ever, having quite recovered from the fright and fatigues of his voyage, and apparently forgetting the perils he would have to encounter on his return.

During our journey along the sea-side, we had frequently seen Russian cruisers in the distance, and as we were advancing the next day, a steamer with a frigate in tow approached us almost within cannon range of the shore. They were the same that had endeavoured to destroy the ships at Taopea, and had no doubt been on a similar errand to the south. Their proximity to us was rather alarming; for, shut in between the

cliffs and the sea, there seemed no retreat should they open their fire upon us. Before they came up, however, we reached a fissure in the rocks which I had not observed, and into this our party ensconced themselves. While waiting there till the Russians had passed, my attendant, Kutchup, pointed out to me a very curious passage, the entrance of which was covered with creeping and wild shrubs. It had been artificially cut in the rock, and ascending upwards by stairs, had served, I was told, as a secret outlet to a castle whose ruins might be seen on the mountain above. I felt desirous of exploring it, but the noxious reptiles and mephitic air it doubtless contained, deterred me from attempting it.

As we approached to Ouwya, the sea was no longer repelled by the cliffs, but the hills gradually receding, left between them and the beach a broad and smiling margin of meadow land, over which were scattered clumps of fruit trees, bearing, in addition to their own burdens of plums, peach, or chesnut, rich clusters of the wild grape. Indeed their appearance, matted, and towering under this heap of borrowed fruit and foliage, had a singular and not displeasing effect. This grape, though small, is of a sweet and pleasant flavour, and the Abbasians make wine from it. Such as I drank was of a sour, thin quality, but I have been

told that very good may be had further south. In Natu-koitch, and the plains of the Kuban, the vine, and indeed every other species of fruit tree, are almost barren ; but the soil, in compensation, is of the richest quality, while in Abbasia it is stony and comparatively sterile. I nowhere met the large flocks and herds which I had been accustomed to see in the north, and not only the cattle, but the men and horses, seemed to be of a stunted and inferior breed.

As we passed through the plain of Ouwya, I could judge, from the multitudes collected there, of the stir and sensation produced in the country by the arrival of an Englishman. We had already had evidence of this upon the road, which was also crowded with wayfarers of every description, bound to the same place as ourselves. Here the chieftain on his barb, in shirt of mail, and girt with bow and quiver, on his left hand his squire, and behind him his page—there troops of Deli-Kans or wild bloods, making the green wood ring with their frolics as they passed,—here the stately effendi, with the turban and flowing *benish* of the Turkish civilian—there, on his ambling palfrey, the venerable *tamata*, duly attended “with that which should accompany old age, honour, love,—obedience, troops of friends,” all hastening to welcome the friendly stranger

who brought them present aid, and future hope against the Muscovite. Nor was I without my share in the general excitement, yielding more than once to the flattering illusion that our government, being about to follow up the energetic language held by Lord Palmerston on the subject of the Vixen, by measures not less decided, had despatched the individual whose presence I was now seeking as a precursor to them. Whoever he might be, I felt eager to hail as a brother one who, setting the piratical blockade of Russia at defiance, had thrown himself fearlessly among the heroic defenders of the Caucasus.

Such were the feelings with which I wended my way among the crowds assembled on the plain of Ouwya, to a house enveloped in vine-clad rocks and trees at the entrance of a glen. Seated in groups about the courtyard were the chiefs composing the guard of honour; through these, dispensing with the formal announcement which they appeared to consider necessary, I made my way to the guest-house, and presented myself suddenly before my countryman, who was somewhat startled to hear himself accosted by a stranger in the garb of Circassia. The interest I felt on my part was not unmingled with concern, when in the corner of the cabin, stretched on a miserable pallet—for, on account of the plague or

Russians, the furniture had been removed to the mountains—I saw an English gentleman dreadfully reduced by the effects of fever. His delicate appearance contrasted strangely with that of the rugged mountaineers who surrounded him, and who, however kind their intentions, make but indifferent nurses; for they have an opinion, which I have always found them to act upon, that the more crowd and bustle there is in a sick room, the better for the patient.* Nadir Bey—for this was the *nom de guerre* adopted by the new comer—was not (what I supposed he might be) an agent of the British government. He was a volunteer in the cause, a gentleman of fortune who had not even the excuse of a younger brother for seeking adventures, being impelled thereto solely by the genuine spirit of chivalry, which so few in this age of cold calculation can even appreciate, and of which Burke has so feelingly lamented the decline; never certainly has it found a more honourable field of enterprise than Circassia.

He had, with a view of taking a passage to that country, come to the coast of Asia Minor, but found it would first be necessary to engage,

* Among themselves, they assemble in the apartment of a sick or wounded man all the girls of the neighbourhood, who endeavour, by constant singing and dancing, to prevent them from sleeping. A singular mode this of treating fever.

among the Cucanians who frequent the sea-ports there, a chief to serve him in the quality of guide and protector. He there fell in with Mehmet Zazi Oglou, who was also in quest of a passage for himself and his merchandise,—the difficulty he experienced in obtaining it, arising from altogether a different cause, viz. his reluctance to pay for it. An arrangement was therefore soon concluded, Mehmet making the most splendid promises of protection, and enlarging upon his ability to serve Nadir Bey in Circassia, and the latter engaging to transport him and his merchandise free of all expense. Aware also of the scarcity of ammunition where he was going, he purchased all that he could find in the neighbouring towns, amounting to sixteen large chests of powder and lead. This he thought of placing, on his arrival, at the disposal of a chieftain who should second him at the head of his retainers in some enterprise or expedition, such as the storming of a fort, or an incursion into the Russian territory. He had not the least idea of the independence which prevails in Circassia, where, since the decline of the Pshees, the chiefs have so little real power, and where every man is at liberty to take the field or remain at home as he chooses, having for the most part a decided objection to fighting for anybody's interest or

amusement but his own. Mehmet, aware, as he undoubtedly was, that, except for the defence of his valley, he could not command the military service even of his own serfs, took care not to enlighten him on these matters, so that he was completely misled as to the extent of his protector's power; though the conduct of the latter during the voyage, short as it was, displayed some peculiarities which in a chieftain so distinguished seemed somewhat extraordinary. Finding that Nadir had a watch, his anxiety to be duly informed of the time of day, and indeed of the night too, was so great, that the former, whose watch was thus day and night in requisition, could think of no expedient to be rid of this annoyance but to give it him. The arrangement, I need hardly say, proved highly satisfactory to Mehmet.

Then he had some very singular notions with respect to property—not that, like some of his countrymen, he was apt to mistake the boundaries of *meum and tuum*, but that, on the contrary, the distinction he drew between them, though decidedly in his own favour, was as marked as possible. For instance, when during their voyage they were held closely in chase by the Russian cruisers, he recommended that, in order to lighten the vessel, Nadir's powder should

be thrown into the sea, forgetting apparently, while he logically demonstrated how trifling the loss when compared with the object in view, that he had a much larger stock of merchandise on board, which he was at liberty to dispose of as he pleased. When reminded of it, moreover, he seemed to think it would by no means answer the same purpose, and that no possible advantage could result from the sacrifice of his property. So much for Mehmet's peculiarities. The pursuit of the Russian cruisers was not quite so entertaining. They had, I was informed, three of these upon them together, all combining their endeavours to intercept them; and it was only by dint of much manœuvring and the most persevering efforts at the oar, in which Nadir set a steady example to the crew, that they succeeded in giving them the slip. One of the enemy's ships had got completely between them and the coast; they contrived, nevertheless, to run their vessel ashore, where the lads of Ouwyä, who had been on the look-out, entering fiercely by their shouts and gestures into the vicissitudes and excitement of the chase, instantly surrounded and transported her from the water to the centre of their valley.

But Nadir found that his anxieties were by no means at an end when he landed at Ouwyä ;

his exertions at the oar had brought on an intermittent fever, and his alarm and disgust had been excited by the rapacity of the inhabitants. The district, as I have intimated already, had a bad character ; and Mehmet Zazi Oglou had confessed it was the last place, could he have helped it, he would have put into. The inhabitants were notorious depredators by land and wreckers on shore, and, in short, disposed to consider as a waif almost everything that came into their hands. Mehmet therefore, foreseeing what would happen, had lost no time in despatching emissaries all over the country to summon the chiefs and tamatas to a council, so that the people of Ouwya, outnumbered and overawed, were compelled to submit to its decisions. Those, however, with respect to the ammunition, were not such as Nadir exactly approved of ; for they had, without consulting him on the subject, determined on an equitable distribution among the different provinces ; while he, on the other hand, wished to retain the disposal of it himself. But while they were engaged in these discussions, other claimants unexpectedly presented themselves.

The steamer, with a frigate in tow, which we ourselves had subsequently observed at sea, stood suddenly — the men all at quarters, and the decks crowded with troops—into the bay of

Ouwya. Information had, it seemed, been conveyed to Sokoum Kalé by the baffled cruisers of the Turkish ship which had been hauled on shore there; and the intelligence having been confirmed, and accompanied with an exaggerated report of the powder it had brought, by his spies, General Rosen had despatched the steamer and its consort to burn or capture it. But on arriving in the bay, they hesitated to execute their orders; for the formidable muster and determined attitude of the Circassians indicated a stout resistance and a doubtful issue. Their rangers lined the woods, and their horsemen swept the plain in every direction; and when at length Nadir Bey, having heard how matters stood, hurried, in spite of his fever, to the beach, smiling and waving his hand to his friends as he passed, the fierce and enthusiastic cheers that greeted him from every side of the bay were such as finally determined the Russians to abandon their attempt. But, though foiled in that, they were still bent on mischief. A few miles further up the coast to the north-west was another Turkish vessel, which they had almost reached before the Circassians, who had assembled at Ouwya, suspected their intentions. No sooner were they aware of them than their cavalry dashed at full gallop along the shore to

overtake the steamer. There was for some time, I was told, a well-contested race between them. Steam, however, with the start it had obtained, outstripped on this occasion the Abbasian courser. The Russians succeeded in landing their men and setting fire to the ship. The Circassians had only the poor satisfaction of killing twenty of them in their retreat.

The differences existing between Nadir and the council were not confined to the subject of his powder. Having made up their minds that he must be an English ambassador, they would listen to no disclaimer he made to the contrary. His obstinacy on this point only served to irritate them, and they ended by telling him in plain terms, that if not an English ambassador, he must be a Russian spy. In this disagreeable dilemma I found him when I arrived at Ouwya, and we immediately laid our heads together to find out what was best to be done under it. We were assisted in our deliberations by Mehmet, who came the day after his brother, Ali Bey, who, if inferior to him in intelligence, surpassed him, as he did every other mortal I have met, in bulk and stature. Also among those who, under existing circumstances, were necessarily admitted to Nadir's confidence, were the individuals of his own suite—a rather motley train,

picked up promiscuously in his travels. There was, in the first place, his dragoman, a Tartar or Polish renegade — a mongrel, or cross of the European and Asiatic, a sort of nondescript not uncommon in the Levant.' He had served as interpreter to some of our most celebrated orientalists, but had chiefly spent his time in rambling all over the East, from Moscow to Mecca from the Ganges to the Bosphorus.

He was, according to his own confession, a consummate knave and hypocrite, but maintained that no man, who was not both one and the other, could make his way in the East. When detected and reproved by Nadir for lying, he would retort in German (for that was his favourite vehicle) that he knew nothing of the *Orientalischer politique*. The better, therefore, to mystify the Easterns, he had adopted the style of Hadji, to which, indeed, having thrice performed the pilgrimage with European travellers in disguise, he was amply entitled. He could when he chose, sustain the character with great effect, performing the ablutions, chanting the namaz, and executing its pious evolutions with a most imperturbable gravity. But alas! *Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.*" The Hadji had, like his father before him, been originally a tumbler, nor could he help, when

in his cups, which, had he behaved with decorum, might have been overlooked, giving the Circassians, as Hamlet says, "a taste of his quality."

Those, therefore, who had been previously edified by his devotion, were not a little scandalized to see the holy man performing summer-sets, or standing on his head. But the Hadji's great delight seemed to be getting into scrapes; his aliment was hot water, and he was never happy when out of it. In short, his adventures, had they been published, would, I believe, have thrown Morier's hero into the shade. In justice to him, after this sketch, I should not omit his good qualities: he was certainly susceptible of attachment, and faithful where attached; his bravery, too, particularly when there was anything to be got by it, was undoubted. His death, which occurred a year afterwards, was truly characteristic. He had joined the Circassians in an attack upon a Russian frigate which had been stranded almost under the guns of Sootcha. She promised a rich booty, and the Hadji was one of the foremost to overhaul her. In his eagerness to do so, he was struck, as he advanced, by a cannon-ball.

Finding his hour was come, he made a merit of necessity, and resolved to meet it like a hero, telling the Circassians that he regretted not to

die in the cause of their independence and the *Din Islam* (their holy religion.) They, on their side, appear to have believed him, for they buried him, as if he had fallen in the odour of sanctity, with all the pomp and ceremony observed at the funerals of their most illustrious chieftains. The minstrels also made ballads about him, ending, as usual, in his canonisation as a martyr.

Another individual who had accompanied Nadir from Trebisonde was Omar, his Turkish secretary, an ingenuous youth, rather fat and foolish, who, unlike the Hadji, trusted less to his wits than to Providence for advancement, of which, having been suddenly raised from the post of a Yazaji, clerk or supercargo of a Turkish trader, to that of Kiatib, or secretary of state, he now concluded himself to be in a fair way. His consequential looks, not less than his bran-new suit of the Nizam or Osmanli regulation dress, plainly bespoke one who thinks "full surely his greatness is a ripening." Nadir had also, in addition to his Turkish servants, a strapping Pole, whom he had ransomed, poor fellow! from slavery. To satisfy the cupidity of his former master, the Turk who commanded the ship in which he had come, he had paid for him eight hundred piastres, or eight

pounds, an exorbitant price for a private, since even a Russian officer may be had for half the sum.

In the council held by Nadir among his friends a great diversity of opinion prevailed. His position was one of considerable embarrassment, arising chiefly from the political character which, do what he could to reject it, the Circassians persisted in investing him with. If his dislike to it, under all circumstances, was strong, it was by no means lessened by the political intelligence he had to communicate, and which, to my unspeakable chagrin and dismay, I found was fully borne out by my letters. The most afflicting part of it was the death of William IV. I knew that in him Circassia had lost her best friend; one who sincerely resolved to stem the tide of Russian aggrandisement—would never have consented to the sacrifice of the most important bulwark opposed to it—and who had, moreover, a generous sympathy for a nation of freemen bravely struggling against a foreign yoke. The disgraceful termination of the Vixen affair, the flimsy and fallacious grounds on which it had been abandoned, the probable tergiversation, and the disavowal of what had hitherto been done for the Circassians, I considered in great measure as the

consequences of the fatal calamity that had deprived England of the most truly English of her kings.

All these unwelcome news were to be broken to the Circassians, an invidious task for the bearer of them ; yet, as they were now congregated in anxious multitudes from every part of the country, it was one which could not be well deferred. There was short time for deliberation. The next morning had been appointed for a grand medjilis or council ; so we hastened to draw up a proclamation to them. We began by informing them of the death of the king of England, and deploring his loss as the most untoward event that could have happened for their cause. We assured them, however, that they had still many friends in Europe, who would not relax their efforts in their behalf. We explained to them all that had been done to arouse attention and sympathy by their benefactor Daoud Bey, Mr. Urquhart ; while the arrival of Nadir Bey, who was wholly unconnected with him, with a supply of ammunition, however inconsiderable, was itself a proof of the growing interest felt by Englishmen in their welfare. But their friends, as I was authorised to assure them by my letters, were preparing to send them out assistance on a much larger scale. We exhorted them,

in the mean while, to persevere in the defence of their native land, and, above all, to be united among themselves. With respect to the Vixen affair, we purposely suppressed all allusion, convinced that the less we said on a subject so discreditable to our government, the better for all parties.

This address having been put into the most highflown Turkish we could muster by Omar, Nadir's secretary, we consulted Mehmet Zazi Oglou about its promulgation. He candidly owned to us it was not at all to his liking—it was not strong enough—he was for invigorating it forthwith by a copious infusion of lies. The Hadji was also of opinion it would be none the worse for a slight tinge of the *Orientalischer politiquer*. But Nadir would not listen to them, repelling, above all, the style of an ambassador, which they wished to invest him with, and declaring, once for all, that he had come there on nobody's account but his own. "In this case," rejoined Mehmet, "you cannot deny that you are an ambassador on your own account." Nadir admitted that he could not, and thus the matter was settled to the satisfaction of everybody. We consented, also, to some trifling alterations in the style, and a few additional flowers of rhetoric, which did not trespass too much on the truth.

Omar himself by no means objected to these emendations, as they gave him an opportunity of inflicting upon us his lucubrations, of which he was very fond, at least twenty times.

CHAPTER IX.

*Important meeting of the Circassians—Our conference with the
Metjilia or Council—Disposal of the gunpowder—Composition
of levies—Circassian marriages.*

THE next morning I accompanied Nadir Bey to the council. He was dressed in a gay yeomanry uniform of scarlet, with green and gold facings—a novelty which produced a no slight sensation in the country. There was a vast assemblage of people on the plain of Ouwya, larger, indeed, than any I had seen since the great meeting at Adheucum, but it was, on the whole, I thought, less civilised and respectable. It is true, we had, from Abbassak, and every district of the sea-coast, chiefs, elders, and magistrates, in number fully sufficient to control by their presence the more intractable and fiery portion of the community.

Yet were there many of the latter, whom, judging from their looks, it would, but for this tranquillising influence, have not been so agreeable to deal with ; for, not to mention the reprobates of Ouwyia, there were a crowd of strangers, speaking a language but little understood by the Circassians themselves, and whom they scarcely looked upon as their countrymen. Among these were some who had descended from the Alpine retreats of the snowy mountains behind Soukoum Kalé—men wild as the regions they inhabited, and, like the beasts they rode, a small and uncouth, though a hardy and active race. They were dark-featured, with projecting jaws and black and grizzly beards. Their costume, though not materially different from that of the rest, was in general much poorer, and the tunic, unconfined by a neat selvidge, and much less a trimming of silver lace, hung mostly in tatters about the wearer.

It was easy to perceive that the habits of these gentry were somewhat roving and predatory. In passing near a glade where the Deli-Kans were at their romps, and where their emulation prompted them as usual to the display of their personal prowess and agility, a trick or two was played off by some of the strangers, which, if not already known to the congenial spirits of Ouwyia,

must have greatly excited their envy and admiration. A horseman at full gallop would snatch up an infant from the ground, muffle it in his cloak, and scamper away with a despatch and dexterity that were truly edifying.

The impressions, however, of a rather unfavourable nature, produced by these observations, were entirely dissipated, and gave way to others of pride and enthusiasm, as we contemplated the mighty gathering of the freemen of Circassia, now scattered from the sea to the mountains all over the plain of Ouwya—the troops of wild horsemen scouring it in every direction—the groups of pedestrians leaning on their staves—the council-rings sedately seated at the foot of every spreading tree—it was altogether a grand and soul-stirring spectacle, yet one which would have affected us still more profoundly, could we have appreciated (which we were then far from doing) the spirit that animated this assembly.

But we did justice neither to the motives that had drawn these children of the wilderness from its remotest recesses, nor to the dignity of our own position, which, it is true, was not that of the ambassadors of any potentate or government on earth, but the representatives of the civilised part of it; in whose presence these simple people had come voluntarily forward to abjure the customs

ad habits which, albeit those of their forefathers, they were at length aware excluded them from the pale of that civilisation. We had at this time, I repeat,—though we were told that all present had sworn to renounce their feuds, and to abstain from future rapine and violence,—but a very imperfect notion of these things: and it was only at a subsequent period, when presiding at the administration of the national oath at Shapsook, that we began fully to comprehend the grand social reform now in operation throughout the Caucasus.

It will be my task, and no very easy one, considering its complication, to unravel the nature and progress of this reform hereafter. I now allude to it, that the reader may perceive how little at the time we understood our relative position, and how trivial the objects by which we were actuated, when compared with those that were fermenting in the minds and hearts of the Circassians. He will see also why we found it so difficult to understand each other, and why, *mezzotermine*, we at length came to adopting the character of ambassadors on our own account, which appeared so ridiculous to us, but was, on the contrary, so satisfactory to them. The misunderstanding was entirely about words; what they wanted was not ambassadors, but witnesses—

witnesses from the civilised world, whom they sought to propitiate by a solemn abjuration of the usages that were obnoxious to it.

When we had taken our seats on the cushions and carpets spread for us under a tree in the centre of the plain, the people formed a large circle around us, the interior of it being occupied by the most distinguished of them, who were spokesmen on the occasion.

I recognised there one of the judges, and a young warrior chief, who had been among the delegates from Abbassak, at the great council of Ahheucum. There was also present Hassan Bey of Khissa, the elder brother of the celebrated Hafouz Pacha, the Turkish visir. He had two other brothers besides, high in the Turkish service, Bahri Pacha and Ali Bey. Still the family was plebeian; and though these connexions had given him wealth, and no little weight on the part of the coast where he resided, they could not ennoble him: the poorest *Ouzden* in the country would have disdained an alliance with him. But the man who is most looked up to hereabouts, is Hadji Sulciman Bey—I presume for his general worth, since for any of the three attributes which are said to entitle a man to consideration here, “the sweet tongue, the sharp sword, or forty tables,” I am not aware that he is

pre-eminently distinguished. These were the individuals with whom our conference was principally held.

In answer to their inquiries for our credentials or firmans, we presented them with Omar's elegant effusion in Turkish, and which, having been read aloud and with much emphasis to the meeting, were received by it with a general murmur of applause; but Hassan Bey, who seemed to pique himself on his talents as a diplomatist, then inquired if we had brought them nothing but our own proclamation; whereupon Mehmet Zazi Oglou, interfering in our behalf, demanded in his turn what more he could expect from ambassadors on their own account. This rejoinder was decisive; but Hassan, who was decidedly the leader of the oppositon, and appeared to make it his especial business to cavil and to raise difficulties, next inquired if it was not the intention of one of us to remain in the south. It was not fair, he said, that all the ambassadors should be kept in the north: they had quite as good a right, he conceived, to an ambassador there as anywhere else: he therefore begged that if Nadir was determined on leaving them, at any rate I would remain in his place. Such an arrangement not at all meeting my views, I flatly refused my consent to it, and told Hassan somewhat bluntly that he might

give us what names he pleased ; we were our own masters, and would go where we pleased ; and that it did not suit my purpose at present to remain there.

In this resolution I was seconded by Keriack Oglou Ali Bey, who, having accompanied me from the north with strict orders from the *mem-leket* there to see me safely back again, and perceiving that it was my own wish to return, now protested warmly against any taint being put upon my actions. The motion of Hassan was therefore overruled, and the rest of the colloquy was conducted between us in the most amicable spirit. The impression mutually produced was highly favourable ; a result, however, to which Nadir could not help thinking his scarlet coat with green and gold facings had materially contributed. To wind up the business of the day in the usual manner, a horse—the rostrum of the Circassian forum—having been led into the midst of the assembly, was mounted by Hadji Suleiman Bey, who began, from “ ridge of steed,” a very rambling discourse to the multitude. His sole qualification was the lungs of a Stentor, since he was well prompted by the bystanders of all parties, which I suppose must have made his speech rather inconsistent. The principal topic was the reform in their own habits which I have

above alluded to. In the mean time the dignity and decorum which characterised the demeanour of an assembly at once warlike and popular—every man standing in an attitude of respect, with his whip hanging from his folded hands—were really exemplary. We retired from it well satisfied, on the whole, with the result of the proceedings.

The only point that gave us umbrage, and on which they would make no concession, was the disposal of the gunpowder. Nadir very justly thought it a hardship that he was not allowed to burn it against the enemy in what way he pleased. On returning to the house, therefore, he consulted Mehmet Zazi Oglou, as to the possibility and propriety of reserving some part of it for their own use, and it was finally decided between them, that four cases out of the sixteen—two for the chieftain and two for Nadir—should be smuggled away among the merchandise of the former, and that twelve only should be abandoned to the *Memleket*.

At night, when left to ourselves in the guest-house, we proceeded to secrete four of the cases, Nadir laughing very heartily at the idea of stealing his own property.

The next day the twelve cases were duly delivered to the deputation who applied for them ;

but though they said nothing about the deficiency in the number, it had not escaped observation. The lads of Ouwya in particular, who had counted them when landed, were very indignant at the fraud which they conceived had been practised on them; and the measures they took to show their sense of it were strong as they were summary. Their way of proceeding, however, was what in England we should call strictly constitutional. Acting apparently upon the doctrine that we could do no wrong ourselves, they determined to visit their grievances on the persons of those whom they looked upon as our responsible advisers; and the first person selected to be made an example of to all evil counsellors, was the ill-starred Omar. Little did he think that the honour of being admitted to our secret councils would involve him in such jeopardy. His head had been fairly turned by the recent success of his proclamation, and when issuing that morning on a visit to the vessel—his fez cavalierly cocked, his writing apparatus ostentatiously stuck in his girdle before, and his silver-mounted pistol behind—I could not help remarking to Nadir, on what capital terms he stood with himself.

Scarce half an hour afterwards, while we were seated at a game of chess, a man in his shirt and

drawers, and those in no very seemly condition, rushed suddenly into the guest-house. Then, standing in the middle of it, the better apparently to display the pickle he was in, all that the unfortunate secretary (for it was Omar himself who stood before us, and horror and indignation had well-nigh deprived him of utterance,) could for some time articulate was, "*Kul oldum*;"—he was pulverized—he was reduced to cinders—in other words, a ruined man. At length, when he had found breath to answer us, we learnt that as he was crossing the stream at the bottom of the valley, a party of Deli-kans, who, it appears, had been lying in wait, pounced suddenly upon him, and before he could ejaculate *Ma! Sha! Allah!* plucked and made the scarecrow, or bipes implumis, of him we now beheld. They had fleeced him of his arms and paraphernalia from top to toe; and the distress of the poor fellow, as he enumerated the separate articles that had well-nigh composed his all in the way of property, was really pathetic. We felt ourselves very angry at this outrage, and, sending for Zazi Oglou, informed him we looked upon it as a personal insult, and that nothing remained for us but to stand to our arms, and at once to ascertain who were our friends and who our enemies in the country.

Mehmet, evidently much disconcerted, left us without saying a word.

In a few minutes we were informed that a deputation of the chiefs and elders desired to confer with us in the courtyard. We accordingly repaired thither, purposely parading our side-arms. On taking our seats, the deepest concern was visible on every countenance, but before they could offer any explanation, we gave vent to our indignation in the strongest terms we could think of. Nor did these lose much in the translation of Nadir Hadji, to whose fertile genius, under the provocation we had received, we allowed free scope. He began by taunting them with the recent reformation they had talked of, and asked them if they intended the outrage they had perpetrated that day as a sample of it; and he finished by telling them, that unless there really was some amendment in their conduct towards us, the Beyzadis would withdraw from the country altogether;—"and then," said he, shaking his head with great solemnity, "I should like to know what will become of you all?" In reply, the Cadi from Abbassak, who spoke for the rest, humbly, though not without dignity, deprecated our displeasure. The things that had been plundered would be immediately restored to us, and

he entreated us to believe that they had not been taken for plunder's sake, but from mistaken motives; in consideration of which, he hoped we would pardon the misguided men who had been guilty of this act of violence. With this handsome apology, and the restitution of Omar's effects, terminated this unpleasant and rather alarming affair.

The congress having been broken up, and the multitude withdrawn to their several homes, I felt anxious to rejoin Mr. Bell, but we were detained a few days longer by the affairs of Mehmet Zazi Oglou at Ouwya. He was one out of the many who, in pursuance of the oath they had taken, were then occupied in the adjustment of their feuds. Some of these were very ancient and inveterate. That which Mehmet had to settle was at least of twenty years' standing, and presented an accumulation of mutual wrong that greatly complicated its arrangement. Nobody, however, could beat him at a bargain, and the number of oxen he drove away as the price of reconciliation was certainly not less than he was entitled to.

Before Nadir took his departure from Ouwya, the old Ouzden, with whom he had been quartered since his arrival, was desirous that he should become a *beslémé*, or foster-son of his family,

The ceremony, *au rigueur*, required that the matron should present the breast to the adopted as to one of her own children, but this part of it was dispensed with in the adoption of Nadir, who was merely introduced into the harem, and invited to salute the women as one of the family.

He thus acquired (not to reckon the whole tribe of Kutsuk, of which he likewise became a member) a great number of blood relations; and the brothers and sisters, to whom it was incumbent on him, as the richest among them, to make presents, proved to be much more numerous than he had previously any conception of. His eldest brother was a tall, handsome youth, whom I had seen in the north, where he had eloped some months before with the daughter of Hadjioli. Elopement, as the reader is probably aware, forms the principal feature in the Circassian marriage ceremony, but is not necessarily a pretence or fiction—it often occurs in reality. In either case, the purchase-money must, at the risk of a feud, be paid to the parents or his bride by the groom or his tribe, and thus a reconciliation, as it proved to be in the present instance, is almost the invariable consequence; and thus, notwithstanding the apparent degradation of the sex as objects of traffic, love-matches are perhaps more common here than in any other part of the world. Even

when the fugitives have not the means of liquidating the claims of the parents, these escapades are not uncommon ; but in that case they abscond into Russia, where, like all other outlaws and runaways, they are always well received, being styled the guests of the Emperor, and otherwise hospitably treated and provided for. Considerations of morality seldom interfere with Russian policy.

CHAPTER X.

Nadir Bey's warlike projects—Arrangements—Circassian commerce—Silver Mines—Pagan rites existing among the Circassians.

WE left Ouwya towards the end of September. My feelings, in turning once more to the north, and brooding over the annihilation of all our hopes, were widely different from those with which I had come—different, too, to those which now animated my companion Nadir, who was occupied almost exclusively with projects of storming castles. These he lost no opportunity of pressing upon the Circassians, who, on their side, seemed to entertain them with ardour, and fully to enter into his views. He proposed, on some dark and stormy night, to advance on one of these forts, scale the walls, overpower the senti-

nels, and surround the barracks and guard-house, before the garrison could muster and stand to their arms. He had well matured his plan in all its details, and though the failure of similar proposals on my part made me less sanguine as to its adoption, I co-operated with him cordially in promoting it, pledging myself, if necessary, to head the assault with him, in order to inspire confidence. These schemes, at any rate, served to divert my thoughts from the subjects by which they were at this moment too painfully depressed.

We arrived at Djouga on the third day of our departure from Ouwya, and remained there for some days. Nadir had another attack of intermittent fever, but he put a check to it immediately by a seasonable dose of quinine. We had also several arrangements to conclude here. Nadir was desirous of limiting his stay in Circassia to three or four months; and in order, at the end of that time, to ensure himself a passage, which, in the uncertainty of the communications during the winter, and imprisoned as we were by the Russian blockade, would be otherwise very precarious, he determined to despatch his dragoman the Hadji to Constantinople, with instructions to purchase a small Turkish vessel, together with a cargo of salt and merchandise sufficient to

cover the expenses he might incur in the interim. It was settled also that Omar, whose ambition to shine as his Circassian secretary had been evidently damped by his late discomfiture at Ouwya, should accompany the Hadji as supercargo.

As Nadir at the same time was obliging enough to offer me his vessel for the transport of any merchandise I was desirous of shipping hither, I resolved to send to Turkey my Greek servant, Demetri, with the produce which I had obtained in exchange for such of my first cargo as had been bartered, amounting to about a fifth of the whole, and consisting of wax, fox-skins, and butter. The remainder we had almost entirely disposed of in presents and for our expenses; our style of living having been anything but economical. But in this respect I had scarcely an alternative. The commercial experiment I had been desirous of making was, after all, as the reader knows, but a secondary object with me; and I soon discovered that the pursuits of a merchant were incompatible with the character of a bey or gentleman, to support which it was necessary my conduct should be beylike or gentlemanly, i. e. liberal almost to extravagance. The merchants, though by no means despised, are not the sort of persons who possess influence in their councils, nor do they look for greater wisdom

from the venders of *aladjas*, than from those "whose talk is of bullocks." Still, had I chosen to confine my attention to it, the speculation would have proved a very lucrative one. The Circassians no doubt preferred that I should make presents of my merchandise, but I was at liberty to dispose of it in barter if I pleased. This is a peculiarity in their character at once indicative of liberality and intelligence. Presents, as I have before observed, are what all are proud to make—none ashamed to ask for or receive: all at the same time are alive to the distinction conveyed in the words of Shakspeare, "I will give double the sum to any well deserving friend; but, in the matter of a right, will cavil for the ninth part of a hair."

Nobody who has been witness to a bargain here, can doubt the great aptitude of the people for commerce; and if they have not already become a commercial nation, it has been owing to causes altogether independent of their disposition, and in some measure, I think, to customs which are inimical to the accumulation of capital; but chiefly to the neighbourhood of nations possessing in an equal degree with themselves the raw produce they have to offer in exchange; they have in consequence been reduced to the necessity of selling their children—a pretty con-

clusive proof, if there can be one, of their decided propensity to trade, this branch of it being in reality a sacrifice of part of their population for the convenience and comfort of the rest.

All articles of cotton manufacture, which ~~are~~ become indispensable to them, are exported from Turkey. I have elsewhere remarked that these cotton goods hold the place of currency here, and so many *top* or pieces are equivalent to so many pounds sterling or piastres; and we found not only that the price of other commodities, but the wages of our servants, were regulated by them. It must be admitted they form a standard more fluctuating than that of money, being much more subject to deterioration, in which the Turks, who manufacture this circulating medium for them, always find their account. The consequence has been, that the quality of these goods has suffered so much, the only objects having been to preserve the length and breadth necessary to the piece, that I have seen them, in some instances, no better in texture and consistency than a sieve. The Circassians, on the other hand, are not easily imposed upon. The nominal price, therefore, or the number of pieces to be given for their commodities, has been augmented in exact proportion to the falling off in the quality of the former.

I have been much amused also to see the close inspection they undergo. It is but justice, however, to our friends to say, that they are as faithful to a bargain when concluded, as they are wary in its negotiation. When they have once joined their hands, which is the form of contract, the engagement is as sacred as a bond could make it elsewhere.

The merchants generally deposit their goods in the house of some chieftain, who, together with his tribe, becomes responsible for their safety. If they wish to press the sale, they despatch itinerant agents all over the mountains; but if in no haste to realize, they deem it more prudent to allow their customer to seek them out, which they invariably do from the most distant quarters.

As to the opening to British commerce, and the extension of which it would be hereafter susceptible in the Caucasus, I am decidedly of opinion, that if government would raise the piratical blockade of Russia, it would present a very fair field for enterprise. Our cotton manufactures, which might easily be adapted to the market, would at once supersede the very inferior articles of Turkey. Lead and gunpowder (English gunpowder is already held there in great estimation) would find a ready and extensive sale;

but the article the shipment of which would prove most lucrative, is salt.


From the very small tonnage of the Turkish ships at present employed in that trade, the transport constitutes an undue proportion of the price; and this the superior size of our vessels, admitting of large cargoes, would very considerably diminish. The exorbitant profit to be made at present in consequence of the blockade, and of which some idea may be formed from the voyage of the *Vixen*, which, but for its capture, would have realized five or six hundred per cent., forms, it is true, no criterion of what it might be under ordinary circumstances; there can be no doubt, however, that the supply of salt to these countries would, with the facilities we possess, be a considerable and advantageous accession to our shipping trade. A point on which a merchant would perhaps feel less confidence, is the nature of the returns; but I do not apprehend the difficulty would be so great as may be imagined. Certainly, he could not purchase slaves, but investments might easily be made in wax, honey, butter, hides, sheep and goats, wool, fox-skins, grain of every description, and boxwood—articles of which there is already a superfluity for home consumption, and which may be had so cheap that they are exported, to a small extent,

to Turkey itself. There is every reason to suppose that the supply of these things would increase with the demand, if we take into consideration that at least two-thirds of the soil are either uncleared or uncultivated. This is a fact which I was for some time at a loss to reconcile with its large population—larger indeed for a rural one than any I had previously met with. I did not reflect at first that it was exclusively rural, and that the produce of its labour was merely for its own use, and not for that of towns and cities, of which there are none whatever, or for exportation.

During our sojourn as guests of the Zazi Oglous at Djouga, Mehmet visited us early one morning with a bag in his hand, from which he produced, with an air of great mystery, some large lumps of ore which he declared to be silver, but which we were rather inclined to believe were tin-stone. Abundance of it, he assured us, was to be had in the place where he obtained his specimens; but he flatly, or rather scornfully, refused to acquaint us where this was. He was not singular in this respect; the remark made by Klaproth as to the caution of the people in this particular we found to be perfectly correct. There seemed to be a general conspiracy among them to conceal from us the

locality of these mines, to which, though they made no secret of their existence, they always declined to conduct us. They have an idea, that were strangers to become fully acquainted with them, they would present an additional inducement for the conquest of their country. Their jealousy is not unfounded; nor have they forgotten that the first expedition undertaken by Russia into the Caucasus was with a view of exploring and appropriating these mines.

The fourth day after our arrival, we perceived a great concourse of people of both sexes in the sacred grove at the bottom of the bay. The sounds of music and revelry issuing all day long from the precincts of the antique wood greatly excited our curiosity, the more so that we had received no invitation to be present, and we did not wish to intrude. Nadir's interpreter, however, the Hadji, who, particularly when there were fun and feasting in the wind, was troubled with no such scruples, was a spectator, and that by no means an idle one, of the festivities. From him we ascertained the reason that we had not been invited. The people had assembled to celebrate a heathen holiday, and as the stricter Mahometans never attended these festivals, it had been presumed, *a fortiori*, that we also would refuse to countenance them. We were much



amused by the Hadji's description of the proceedings. The wooden representative of the deity Seoseres, consisting of a post, with a stick placed crosswise towards the top, had been planted in the centre of the grove, and the lads and lasses had danced about it in a ring. The oldest of the patriarchs present, who officiated as priest, had then come forward and delivered a thanksgiving for the success of the harvest. Offerings, in the shape of bread, honey, and triangular cheesecakes, and, lastly, an ample bowl of boza, were duly presented to the idol; but he showing no stomach for them, they were handed to his votaries, who had apparently much keener appetites.

To crown the whole, a bull was led to the foot of the wooden deity, and there sacrificed, having his throat cut with a cama. The carcass was taken away, roasted, and afterwards distributed to the multitude, that they might eat and be merry. This, in fact, seemed to be the principal object that had brought them together; and till Islamism can furnish an apology for feasting and good fellowship as satisfactory, it seems improbable that the joyous old pagan rites will be hastily abandoned.

CHAPTER XI.

Retreat of the Russian army—Nadir Bey's reception at Semex—
Opening of a tumulus—We take leave of the Semezians.

WE left Djouga on the 1st of October, and arrived at Shapsine by the route I had taken in coming. All the castle-capturing enthusiasm of my companion was aroused at the sight of the newly-erected fort. We got a near view of it from the spur of a hill that sinks abruptly into the valley a few hundred yards distant from it, and from whence it might be shelled or cannonaded with the greatest facility. The place had an appearance of solitude, having been abandoned by the army a fortnight before. Russians as they were, I could not help pitying the prospects of the unfortunate garrison, con-

demned to a dreary confinement for at least six months, during which all communication with their countrymen would be cut off both by land and sea. In the mean while, the fort gave no more alarm to the Circassians than, to borrow a simile of their own, one of the huge old tumuli mouldering in the depths of their forests. It is true, the appearance at any time of armed men in the neighbourhood (as we could ourselves perceive from the bustle on the ramparts) was calculated to rouse them from their lethargy. The wall of the fort was about fifteen feet high, embattled, surmounted with heavy ordnance, and flanked with bastions.

The chiefs, who saw nothing new or attractive in a Russian fort, hurried us away as soon as they could to our konak for the night, which was about three miles further on; but Nadir, intent on his enterprise, and by no means satisfied with this hasty view of the fort, had made up his mind to reconnoitre it more closely the next morning. Early in the gray of it, before anybody was stirring, our horses were saddled, and accompanied only by Kutchuk, Nadir's attendant, we retraced our steps along the green and wooded banks of the Shapsine. Tower and battlement were gradually unfolding themselves in the rising sun, when, alighting at a short distance from the

fort, we crept from bush to bush till we had come within musket-shot of the walls, and could distinguish the features of the sentinels on duty. Having completed our survey, we regained our konak at a gallop. The dew was yet on the grass when we reached it; but the chiefs, who had assembled in our absence, were evidently discomposed at our morning's ride. They had a decided objection to our moving about without an escort; and they hinted that such early visits to a Russian fortress might be misinterpreted by the people.

It was for this reason, probably, that they made a circuit through the woods to avoid the fortress of Pchad. We put up on the night of the 2nd of October at a house in the valley of Hyder Bey, which, as I have before remarked, is separated by a precipitous mountain barrier from Ghelendjik, where we learnt the emperor Nicholas had already arrived by a steamer on the same day. We had the honour of being lodged scarcely at three miles' distance from him. It seemed he had at length determined to pay his Circassian provinces a visit. His curiosity, however, was satisfied with a very superficial survey of them—a sort of bird's-eye glance, or rather fox's peep, from Anapa and Ghelendjik.

Every precaution had been taken to render the

experiment safe. The army, leaving behind its cattle and provisions, with some hundred dead, whose bones (in some instances unburied) we had seen bleaching on the way, had come thither by forced marches to protect his imperial person. The whole of the heights above us, occupied by a strong cordon, were bristling with bayonets, in order that the observations which he was about to make might not be disagreeably interrupted, but be taken with the composure and indifferency of mind which Locke declares to be indispensable for arriving at a sound conclusion. But fate had ordained it otherwise. A fearful conflagration broke out that very night, which was a stormy one, at Ghelendjik; so that even this favoured spot was found, like the rest of Circassia, too hot for him. After making sundry fine speeches to his poor devils of soldiers, the whole of whose magazines and provisions had been devoured by the fire, he set out the next day in the steamer for Redout Kalé, on his way to Tiflis.

Ghelendjik was the principal dépôt for the supply of the army, and the whole of their stock for a year had consequently been consumed. The only buildings which, being constructed of stone, escaped, were the powder magazine and a church. The numerous deserters whom we in-

terrogated on the subject, (for a great many, notwithstanding the emperor's presence, had profited by the confusion of that night to run away,) agreed in declaring that General Williamanoff and his staff had themselves set fire to the magazines, in order that the emperor on seeing them might not detect their wholesale fraud and spoliation. Nicholas, who although reducing thousands to misery every day of his life, is one of the most sentimental tyrants upon record, repeatedly exclaimed during the fire to his soldiers, "My children, this misfortune is all my own"—an assertion which his children, seeing they were to be starved, and not he, might very reasonably doubt. Two days afterwards the army, now exposed to the horrors of famine, which they had been sent to inflict by the agency of the same element on the Circassians, made the best of their way, closely escorted, as usual, by the rifles of the latter, to the Kuban.

The timely retreat of the Russians, which had taken place much earlier than they had anticipated, had put all the world in a good humour. It had been generally reported, and believed, that after the construction of their fort at Shapsine, they would have closed the campaign in the usual way, by the devastation of the plains of the Kuban. But the destruction of their magazines

at Ghelendjik had intervened, most providentially for the Circassians, whom, on our arrival at Semez, we found in the best spirits, and, notwithstanding the indifferent news we brought them, more friendly to us than ever. We then experienced how much accident has to do with popularity, and that if to be blamed unjustly be the "hard condition twin-born with greatness," to be applauded with as little reason is as decidedly another. Scarcely a week before, as I learnt from Mr. Bell, the impending horrors of Russian warfare, and the failure of their expectations from abroad, had operated considerably to our prejudice; so much so, indeed, that the emissaries of Russia (for it is not surprising that, in the absence of all administration or police, she should be able to bribe many individuals to do her work for her,) had begun openly to inculcate the necessity of making peace, and to persuade the Abbassaks to refuse the Englishmen access into the interior of the country.

These machinations, however, found few abettors, and no sooner had they reached the ears of our old host Shamiz, than he forthwith saddled his horse and rode over to Mansour Bey at Sebebsi, to consult with him as to the means of counter-acting them. Both the chieftains were of opinion that the conspiracy should be stifled in its birth;

they hastened, therefore, to the stream of Azips in Shapsook, the head-quarters of the traitors, and summoned a council on the spot. Five of them having been summarily tried and convicted before it, their houses were burnt to the ground, their property confiscated, and themselves and families sold into slavery. Three out of the five afterwards effected their escape into Russia. These measures may appear (especially among a free people) somewhat harsh and arbitrary : certainly none but the most influential chieftains would have ventured upon them, aware as they must have been of their responsibility to the tribes of the offenders, as well as the community at large ; but the guilt of the parties was manifest ; and even the tribes, tenacious as they usually are of the privilege of punishing their own members, abandoned them in this instance to their fate.

Shamiz, on his return, which was a few days after our arrival, received Nadir in the most cordial manner. Visitors also poured in from every part of the province, both to pay their respects to the new comer, and to inquire after the news. Such as we had to communicate were anything but encouraging ; but, instead of repining at them, they on their part endeavoured to console us, expressing their confidence of our receiving satisfactory intelligence from Zefir Bey, in

answer to the despatches they had sent by Nogai Ismael. Mr. Bell had also, in the letters from his friends, received promises of assistance through private channels, to which, sensible as we were what important results might be obtained here from the most trifling resources, we were by no means indifferent. Nadir, on the other hand, was still bent on signalizing himself by the capture of a fort, and did not fail to discuss the matter with every chieftain who presented himself at his levée. All of them, though warmly approving of his plans, referred him to Haud Oglou Mansour Bey, without whose participation they declared nothing of importance could be undertaken in Natu-koitch.

The old warrior, however, was lying bedridden in consequence of the ulcer I have before alluded to in one of his feet, which had been half frozen away during an incursion into Russia, about twenty winters before, and which it had since baffled the skill of the Circassian leeches to heal. Fortunately Nadir had brought with him a medicine chest, provided with which he now proposed to repair to the house of Mansour at Sebebsi, with a view of setting as soon as possible upon his legs a champion so indispensable to the success of his enterprise. It had been determined, moreover, to profit by the cessation of hostilities, and

to summon to a council, for the discussion of the national interests, all the chiefs and elders of the belligerent provinces. But the same dilatory spirit that had displayed itself in every public transaction since our arrival, now detained us for three weeks longer in the valley of Semez.

Still the time was not wholly lost. Mr. Bell and myself were engaged in preparing our letters, which the departure of our servants for Turkey presented a good opportunity of despatching—an opportunity which, few ships venturing across the Black sea at this stormy season, we knew would not recur for some months to come. Having, moreover, made up our minds to winter in Circassia, we had to get ready our winter garments, consisting of sheepskin doublets worn with the wool inwards under the tunic, the hood or stout frieze capuchin covering the kalpac and shoulders, and, finally, the cloak of thick brown felt. No warrior undertakes a journey or campaign at this season of the year unprovided with these articles, and we had already experienced in the bleak and cutting blasts of November a foretaste of the weather we were to expect a little later. Nadir also, in addition to his other cares, was engaged in providing shoes for his horse, for it was only after a diligent search and much lecturing that a blacksmith could be found to make them.

Our time was partly employed in another occupation, in which we had been invited to co-operate by the people of Semez. In the midst of the forest, at the bottom of the valley, and apparently almost coeval with it, buried in swamps, underwood, and rank vegetation, was a rude and enormous tumulus or cairn. It was difficult to conjecture, unless hurled there by a race of giants, how the ponderous stones, of which it was composed, had been collected together, for the inhabitants declared there were none of a similar nature in the neighbourhood. An attempt had been made at some former period to excavate this monument. Several stones had been detached from the top, and it had been honey-combed all over by spades and pickaxes; but, according to a tradition existing on the subject, those who were engaged in the task had been suddenly assailed by the goblin guardians of the treasure, and, blasted by the view, the heads of the whole party had whisked about, like so many weather-cocks, on their shoulders.

Since the period of this catastrophe, which few were old enough to remember, the Semeziens had not repeated the experiment, but contented themselves with boasting of the treasure, which, though under such questionable custody, was contained

in their valley, Their hopes of appropriating it were now all at once revived.

In Mr. Bell, or Yacoub Bey, as they called him, they fancied they had found an ally, under whose auspices the fiends might be successfully defied. His botanical and geological researches had, it is true, been viewed by them at first with alarm and suspicion, but the cures he had effected by bleeding and medicine, though deemed no less pretur-natural, had taught them to think that the powers who aided him were at all events beneficent. The circumstance also which had raised his reputation, and made him in their opinion more than a match for the evil one, was his announcement of a lunar eclipse, which he had foretold by the aid of an almanac, but of which (the eclipse, and not the almanac) he had pretty generally the credit of being himself the author. They proposed to him, therefore, that he should attend in person the excavation of the monument in the character of exorcist or conjuror.

Having obtained his consent, the whole neighbourhood, armed with spades, hatchets, and levers, repaired on the day appointed to the scene of operations. It proved one of no small interest. The weather being raw and cold, they had kindled large fires, whose blaze, as it rose at intervals,

threw an unwonted light into the recesses of the old forest, the silence of which was also broken by the jarring sounds of their implements in the prosecution of their work. The mingled awe and eagerness with which the workmen set about it, heaving and rolling away the massive stones, and excavating the earth beneath, communicated itself quickly to the spectators, who readily relieved such as were fatigued. For three successive days the task was continued with unabated ardour, and on the third, at a considerable depth beneath the surface of the ground, they came to a rude sarcophagus or trough, about six feet by three, built completely of stones. But it was found to contain nothing but a few fragments of *terra cotta*. Thus, arrived at the place where the treasure was not, terminated their labour and their search, neither of that nor the goblins who guarded it could any trace be discovered; unless, as was suspected, the former had by some infernal process been transmuted into the pieces of pot aforesaid, and the demons themselves had, in the redoubted presence of Yacoub, found refuge in the bodies of certain ground squirrels, a nest of which had been turned up in a half torpid state in the course of the excavation.

The time of our departure from Semez being now at hand, the inhabitants, who seemed always loath to let us go, invited us to a

farewell feast in the centre of the valley. They there appointed us an escort, with instructions not to lose sight of us in our travels. When we had mounted our horses to leave them, one of their elders came forward, and addressed us in behalf of the assembly: he said, "that now they were about to lose us, though he trusted only for a time, they felt more than ever oppressed by the sense of the obligations we had conferred upon them and their country at large, and which they were conscious of having done so little to requite; but on our return to them they hoped the arrangements they proposed to make would prove more satisfactory."

It was *aih*, a disgrace to their valley, that we should have been at any expense for the support of our establishment, but the *memleket*, they promised, would in future relieve us from every charge by voluntary contributions. In reply, we made them suitable acknowledgments, declining at the same time the offer of contributions which would be incompatible with the independence which it was not less our interest than desire to maintain among them. No further allusion was made to the presents which, as I have related, they appeared at the commencement of our residence at Semez to expect from us; and giving them full credit for the disinterestedness of their

present professions, we took good care to say nothing on the subject ourselves.

Some of them, indeed, as we made them our salam, looked rather blank and chopfallen, as if something had been forgotten, or there had been some mistake in the matter. We rode away, however, resolved, as his grace the Duke of Wellington once expressed himself, that there should be no mistake about it.

Our host Shamiz did not accompany us on this expedition, but remained at home on the plea of domestic affairs. The truth was, that he had himself been in Shapsook a few days before, and had failed in his attempts to assemble either a war party or a council. The pride of the old Ouzden had been much hurt by this failure, for the inference to be drawn from it was anything but corroborative of his influence. Influence depending so little on adventitious circumstances, and so much on personal qualities, exercised in a field so open, and resolving itself into elements as simple as those which establish the superiority of a schoolboy over his playfellows, is necessarily a thing of very precarious tenure; nor will a prudent chief, aware that its existence admits of no other proof than its exercise, rashly put it to the test. Mansour, for instance, though all declared his influence to be unbounded, knew

perfectly well what limits to prescribe to it, nor would he, like Shamiz, have summoned a council, unless he had felt sure the summons would be obeyed. In the mean time, the latter, nettled, as I have said, at the slight he had received in the rejection of his counsels, remained at home, apparently to show his sense of this indignity.

In his place, however, he appointed to accompany us, his son Cheretlook, a youth of fifteen, and, as a sort of deputy mentor, his squire and freedman Ongasoff. This was a middle-aged person, much in the confidence of his superior, who, having brought him up from childhood, had manumitted him since our arrival. "*Like master like man*," is a proverb peculiarly apposite all over the East, and it was thought that Ongasoff, always jogging in the wake of Shamiz, must, of necessity, have imbibed a portion of his wisdom; but I am inclined to think, that that of the squire was like his coat, but of a second-hand description; for we, who were to have the benefit of it in our travels, soon found that when separated from the source of his wisdom, Sir Oracle was dumb. The only indication he gave of it, an equivocal one it must be confessed, was his undisguised contempt for that of other people. The air of pity with which he would listen to us, without condescending to remove his pipe from his

mouth to reply, was really provoking—at least Nadir began soon to doubt if it entitled him to the hundred piastres, which, having been, at the recommendation of Shamiz, admitted into his suite, he received from him monthly. But from whomever he received his pay, it was clear, from the trips on which he would every now and then absent himself to Semez, in whose service he considered himself to be. These visits were, no doubt, intended to keep Shamiz duly informed of our transactions with the other chieftains, in all of which the wily old Ouzden, though affecting to keep aloof from public affairs, took an undiminished interest.

Our whole plan of campaign had been settled before we set out. If the council which was talked of proved only another device to detain us, and if Nadir's project for the capture of a fort should miscarry, it was our intention to leave these provinces, and penetrate without further delay into Abbassak. But the sequel showed we had, as usual, reckoned without our host. In the mean time, Nadir was very sanguine as to the success of his enterprise, and he had made up his mind to promise the chieftains, as an inducement for their co-operation, to bear the charges of an embassy to England on his return thither.

CHAPTER XII.

Visit to Mansour—Treatment of his wound—Our popularity—
War and Romance—Kaplan the Tiger.

IN high spirits, and at the head of a numerous cavalcade, we left the valley of Semez, October 28. The autumnal gales which had been raging for some time past, had yielded to weather bright and balmy as that of June. The hills, however, stripped of their foliage, had a bare and bleak appearance, and the habitations that had nestled among them in the summer, were now everywhere exposed to view.

We spent that night at the house of our friend Shupash, and the next at the cottage of a Tocav, still nearer to the fortress of Anapa. The people thereabouts were, notwithstanding the retreat of

Russian army, engaged in petty hostilities with the garrison, a sort of partisan warfare which more to their taste; an exchange of civilities, as it were, which had of late grown very heated; the Russians leaving the fortress every other night on house-burning and sheep-stealing expeditions, and the Circassians retaliating with compound interest on the unfortunate Russians. Both Nadir and myself would fain have joined in the sport, but business more urgent hurried us away from this interesting neighbourhood, and the next evening we were quarantined in the house of Kambour Djefs, the renowned hunchback at Westagoi. Here again we had abundant matter for excitement. Our hosts, as daring a moss-trooper as any in Circassia, related the pleasures of a tramp by moonlight in the Kuban in the most tempting colours, when this was followed by a promise on the part of the narrator, that if we would accompany him, we should ourselves have as pretty a tramp as a man could desire the very next day, and he at once took him at his word, and proceeded to place himself, without further delay, under our lance so unexceptionable. But the Kambour, on recollecting that we were the *musafirs* of the *memleket*, (guests of the country,) shrank, on second thoughts, from the responsibility of taking

us over the Kuban without the sanction of the council. This was not the first time that the greatness which had been thrust upon us had interfered with our personal liberty, and Nadir, in particular, was disposed to shake off its trammels. Our only chance of escaping from them was to attach ourselves to some chieftain of sufficient weight not to shun the responsibility so discreetly declined by Djefs.

If there were anybody in possession of such authority, we knew it must be Mansour: to him, therefore, we determined to address ourselves, and despatched a messenger to his house, announcing our intention of visiting him. We received for answer an invitation for the next day: for that night he begged we would repose ourselves at the house of the merchant Aretine, who dwelt a short distance higher up the stream of the Sebebsi than himself. This was the wealthy Armenian I have before adverted to; and a word from his patron, had there been no other motive for it, would have been sufficient to ensure us the best treatment at his hands. But the fact was, that in all the Armenian houses where we were quartered during our travels, though I believe little indebted to their hospitality for it, we fared very sumptuously. Their own position was too equivocal, and they lay under too general a sus-

picion of disaffection, not to pretend the greatest consideration for the guests of the country.

On arriving the next day at the modest dwelling of Mansour, we could discover nothing indicative either of wealth or power in its possessor. Unremunerated for the time and attention he devoted to public affairs, his patrimony had gradually decayed rather than flourished in his hands, and all that remained of it was a herd of brood mares allowed to roam at large over the plains of the Kuban. Notwithstanding the frequent expeditions he headed into the enemy's territory, he derived little or no advantage from them, refusing, for the most part, from motives at least as prudential as they were disinterested, to share in the spoil that resulted from them. His countrymen, on the other hand, took good care that he should not starve in consequence of his moderation, and the farm of their Cincinnatus was restocked from time to time by their voluntary supplies of cattle. As many as fifty sheep together had been given to him by his friend Arslan Ghéri in our presence.

But if the residence of the chieftain presented no appearance of opulence or splendour, the evidences that it afforded of his influence were palpable as they were interesting to us. So great indeed was the concourse of visitors who flocked

to it, of venerable elders who came to consult him on the public weal, or of Deli-Kans eager for some adventure or foray, that the neighbouring trees scarce sufficed for the horses, or the walls of his guest-house for the weapons that were attached to them.

We passed through this crowd to the apartment prepared for us, and we were there presently waited upon by our host in person. He had just risen from his bed, and supported his steps with a crutch ; but his demeanour, in spite of the pain he underwent, was cheerful and polite ; and Nadir, who now saw him for the first time, was not less charmed by his urbanity than impressed with the manliness and candour of his disposition. They were certainly calculated to banish all reserve at a first interview, and we intimated our wish, when the guest-house should be cleared of other visitors for the evening, to have some confidential conversation with him. The last person to leave the room, and who seemed designedly to linger there, was Aretine.

Mansour, at length losing patience, told him, somewhat sternly, he had our permission to withdraw. Relieved, as we thought, of his company, we were beginning our conference, when we were informed by our attendants, that the Armenian was lying fast asleep under the eaves of the guest-

house. This was literally playing the eaves-dropper with us; a hint was accordingly conveyed to him, that he would do well to finish his nap out of ear-shot. We then resumed our discourse.

The subject on which we chiefly dwelt was our anomalous position in these provinces, and the impossibility we experienced of making his countrymen understand who we really were. Thus we saw ourselves at one time the subjects of the most absurd suspicions, and at another of homage, almost as irksome to us. All that we desired, was the liberty of disposing of ourselves and our time as we thought fit. Mansour, in reply, expressed his sincere regret at the annoyance we complained of—which, however, was to be attributed to the ignorance, and not to the ill-will of his countrymen. Their judgment had been much perplexed by their own difficulties; and, unaccustomed to the presence of Europeans, they could not help deceiving themselves as to the objects of our visit. They could not see, what was obvious enough to him, that there must be a beginning to all international relations, and that they were under great obligations to individuals who, having no personal interest in the country, as he expressed himself, neither father nor mother there, had encountered so many hardships to visit

them ; others, he doubted not, would follow, and when, by this means, friendship had been cemented between the English and the Circassians, they might reasonably look for the most beneficial consequences.

There was so much good sense and feeling in these observations of Mansour, that Nadir at once communicated his intention of taking with him, on his return to England, an embassy composed of the representatives of their different provinces—a measure, which, if adopted by them, he conceived would greatly facilitate the establishment of the relations he considered so desirable. To give *éclat* to such a mission, he added, the best thing they could do in the mean while was to undertake some decisive operation against the enemy, and he thereupon unfolded to him his plan for the capture of a fort. Mansour, who listened with evident satisfaction to both these proposals, then expressed his regret that the state of his foot would not permit him to take the field immediately ; but a few days he trusted would enable him to attend to the execution of this enterprise in person. The interval, he added, might be profitably employed by us in conciliating the favour of the people,—an indispensable step for all who aspired to be their leaders. “ My countrymen,” he said, “ are a sturdy and stiff-

necked generation, who care not for the frowns of any prince or pacha in existence, whereas, *tatlu dil*, fair words, will, I have ever found, go a great way with them. This, between ourselves, is the secret of my own popularity."

He then intimated to us that it was a general complaint among the Tocavs, or commoners, that we had neglected them for the nobles. This statement we knew to be perfectly correct, but we were aware, at the same time, that the odium of our exclusive habits had been visited less upon us than on the nobles themselves; and particularly on our friends the Chippa Kows, who, it was insinuated, had monopolized our persons to make a similar monopoly of our presents.

But our first care was the recovery of Mansour. His mutilated foot, which, by the way, he at first felt some repugnance to expose to them, was duly inspected by Nadir and Mr. Bell. The ulcer had remained open upwards of twenty years, and had evidently been badly treated. Such as it was, however, they did not despair of curing it, and the change for the better operated in a few days seemed to Mansour himself almost miraculous. Yellow basilicon and corrosive sublimate performed wonders, which verses from the Koran, blazoned in all the colours of the rainbow, and swallowed with great perseverance for twenty years, had

failed to effect before. Nor had the efforts of the Russian doctors at Anapa, in which fortress Mansour had lingered several months in hopes of obtaining a cure, been more effectual. This was during the good old times when Russia, with even-handed justice, dealt blows and douceurs at the same moment, and while carrying on a war of extermination on one frontier, opened the gates of Anapa to Circassian commerce on the other. On the pernicious tendency of this commerce, and the way it was providentially put a stop to, I have spoken at length in another place. With respect to the Russian doctors, as we had much weightier reasons to see the first warrior in Circassia in fighting order than they could have had, this essay of our medical skill was probably on that account more successful.

The ensuing fortnight was spent within a day's ride of Sebebsi, our attention during that time divided between the cure of Mansour's foot and the execution of the plan he had suggested to us for captivating the affections of the commons,—a task of some difficulty, and requiring scarcely less tact than a canvass for electioneering purposes in England. To engage followers for an enterprise here, it is necessary to begin by enlisting their confidence and good-will. In this indispensable preliminary, Nadir was specially aided by three

individuals, who had been recommended to him by Mansour as familiars of his own, and all, as he assured him, good men and true, who knew everything and everybody in the country, and could materially promote his views. At any rate, it was pretty certain, I apprehended, he could, under such auspices, do little in opposition to those of Mansour. One of these was Djefs, the hunchback, with whom the reader is already acquainted. Another was an individual whose name, but not whose obliging disposition, I have forgotten, and who offered to be our purveyor in more ways than I care to particularise. The third, and most respectable, was Hassan, a Tocav, much esteemed by those of his own class, though disliked by the nobles, to whom he affected a saucy roughness, and yielded reluctantly the marks of deference universally paid them by others. He was consequently involved in frequent squabbles, and some of the retorts made to him in our presence were certainly none of the most courteous, though less directed against his personal character, which as a warrior and patriot was unexceptionable, than against his tribe, which was poor and insignificant.

It was while frequenting the houses of the Tocavs that the bickerings and heart-burnings which had arisen between them and the Ouz-

dens, were most perceptible to us. In one instance, I had given a small case of fine English gunpowder to be divided between two individuals of our suite, one of whom I had forgotten, or was not aware, was a noble, and the other a commoner. The former, I was told by our dragoman, had haughtily relinquished the whole to the latter, disdaining to share it with him. The powder which had been offered is what few here, be they noble or plebeian, could not but feel thankful for ; but dignity, it appears, is a thing to be prized even before fine English gunpowder.

Of the Tocavs in general we have every reason to speak in commendation. Their hospitality, if not so refined, was at least as hearty as that of the Ouzdens, and certainly more disinterested ; since to them we presented ourselves comparatively empty-handed. Hospitality, in fact, though a national virtue, can be scarcely reckoned a merit in individuals, since all claim its exercise as a right, and it were little less than sacrilege to withhold it. In the whole course of my residence, I encountered but a single exception to this rule, and as such, I think it worth recording.

We had alighted one evening, after the fatigues of a long ride, in the yard of a substantial farmhouse, which had been fixed upon, we were told, as our konak for the night ; but our host, a surly

old knave, instead of bestirring himself and his household to light a fire and spread couches for us in the guest-house, stood, contrary to custom, stock-still at the door of the harem, casting sundry indignant glances at our followers, as they defiled at some length into the courtyard, and muttering something which appeared not very complimentary to us, and which, having insisted on a translation, I was told reflected on the numbers of our train, the filling of whose bellies he seemed, on a moderate computation, to reckon would be as expensive to him as a funeral or wedding-feast. Not liking the mode or measure of his hospitality, we remounted our horses, and prepared to seek a better reception elsewhere. But the Gaffer, who had not anticipated this retrograde movement, and who saw he would be eternally disgraced if he permitted it, made a rush at the gate to cut off our retreat: so great, indeed, was his anxiety to prevent it, that he narrowly escaped being trampled on by our horses, whose bridles he would not relinquish, protesting loudly that what he had said was in jest, and taking everybody to witness if he was not the most facetious old fellow in all the Natu-koitch, and if anybody heeded a button what he said. As all of them seemed to agree with him in this last proposition, we were gradually mollified, and

suffered ourselves, partly by force and partly by persuasion, to be reconducted to the guest-house. The treatment we subsequently experienced, together with the pressing invitation we received from our host to consider his house henceforward as our home, went a great way to convince us that he was in earnest then, whatever he might have been in our first reception.

So far, in general, from meeting with coldness in this respect, we found the people in our progress to vie with each other in throwing open their doors to us. Among others who aspired to the honour, for such they esteemed it, of entertaining us, was one, whose conduct, forming as it does a fair contrast to that above detailed, I may be excused for annexing to it. This was a timid little man, of weak and puny frame, such as among a warlike people is ill calculated to obtain consideration or respect. We had for some time observed him following, but ever at a respectful distance, in our suite : at length, without venturing on a direct invitation, he intimated to our dragoman the pride he would feel at receiving us under his roof. Thanking him for his proffered hospitality, we embraced it without hesitation, and were much diverted, while at his house, with the extreme delight, checked in some measure by a feeling of awe, which our condescension in con-

suming his good cheer visibly imparted to him. Emboldened by the encouragement we gave, he grew more communicative, and gradually opened his heart to us.

“My father,” he said, “was a man esteemed and cherished by the whole country, for he was of the mightiest ; his valour prevailed in the field, and his voice in the council. Such a lion, in short, was he, and so poor a creature am I, that I blush almost to mention him. It is only in discharging the duties of hospitality, and in doing the honours of his house to guests like yourselves, that I feel I am worthily replacing him, and not unworthily employing the patrimony he has bequeathed to me. It is then, also, that I am not ashamed to dwell upon his memory.”

In short, our friends the Tocavs improved greatly on acquaintance, while our popularity, as Mansour had foretold, increased in a like ratio amongst them. Mr. Bell, in particular, by his active benevolence and attentions to the sick, was justly entitled to their gratitude. In a place where, though there might be some small skill in surgery, and wounds were treated with a certain degree of success, the medical resources of the people were confined to the knowledge of a few simples, a small medicine chest and a volume of Buchan proved real treasures in his hand. Many

who had despaired of a remedy, and groaned for years under what they considered incurable disease, were by these means restored to health. His fame and his practice augmented daily, and the house where we lodged had every morning the appearance of a dispensary. Nadir, also, soon made his way with the Deli-Kans, among whom he was well qualified to shine, by his proficiency in field sports. A crack shot with the rifle, he more than once bore away the prize at their shooting-matches, and though harder pushed at their races, at which their skill in dodging and winding on horseback seemed to give them the advantage, he had therein also resources of his own, and showed he had not ridden steeple-chases for nothing. I shall not forget their surprise and glee, when, in his first essay, being closely pressed by his pursuers, who thought they had driven him into a corner, he left them suddenly at fault by clearing the high fence before him.

Leaping, which was before only practised from necessity, became, after Nadir had set the fashion, quite in vogue as an amusement; and for some time afterwards the Deli-Kans, we could see, were putting their nags at the fences all over Natukoitch. This superiority, instead of exciting envy, was admired by all in a manly spirit of fair play; indeed, the praises that were bestowed on it

sounded sometimes rather suspiciously from their extravagance; and in the number of those who applied to be retained among his immediate satellites, were some whose motives might, perhaps, be called in question. One man, as was duly reported to him by his servant Kutchuk, declared there was an indescribable something in his face which had completely fascinated him; and, in short, nothing would serve his turn but to bind himself to him by the solemn vow of friendship and fidelity, which, like the Deli-Kans of the heroic ages, such as Damon and Pythias, &c., those of Circassia are to this day accustomed under such circumstances to exchange with each other. Nadir, though he saw nothing in the round unmeaning face and snub nose of this romantic swain, who was, moreover, turned of fifty, to produce a corresponding sensation on his part, consented nevertheless, out of curiosity, to humour him. Accordingly, at night, when all other visitors had retired, for it seemed the ceremony demanded secrecy, the fellow was introduced into the guest-house, and, after a great deal of amusing mummery and grimace, he gave him, by way of finale, as we thought, an affectionate squeeze of the hand: but Kutchuk, who acted as interpreter, and took a somewhat suspicious degree of interest in the ceremony, now

intimated that, to ratify it, it was incumbent on him, who was the wealthier of the two, to make a suitable donation to the other. But with this stipulation Nadir begged to be excused from complying, and declared rather unceremoniously to his Achates, that "he would see him hanged first;" so that the latter, his feelings apparently much hurt at the refusal, made a precipitate retreat, nor did we see anything more of him from that day forward.

Thus it was clear, that if Nadir wanted a hero, this at least was "not the true one." Such disappointments will, I believe, be often experienced by those who travel in search of the romantic; though, certainly, if anywhere to be met with, it must be sought in a state of society resembling that on the Circassian border, for it is amid the elements of strife and danger prevailing there that the spirit of adventure is fostered and kept alive in the highest possible degree. On the other hand, we found the population neither fierce nor licentious; if such propensities were indulged in, it must have been on the Russian side of the Kuban, for nowhere are the decencies and charities of life practised more religiously than within these much calumniated borders. Nor is this surprising; the bonds of social existence will be drawn the more closely in propor-

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tion as they are threatened with a common danger from without.

It is only when at war with another that the sentiment of patriotism in a nation is displayed in its full force; and war, however much it may be the fashion to deny it, and however frightful when, to promote the colossal scheme of insensate ambition, it wields the combined resources of science and civilisation, and wades in wholesale massacre,—is, undoubtedly, while confined to certain limits, and prosecuted in a chivalrous spirit, the parent of the noblest virtues. If developement of the human character, national and individual, be the great end of our being, then is war, whose aim is glory, not so great a curse, nor peace, whose pursuits are much more interested and material, so great a blessing, as they are generally pronounced to be. It may be objected, I am well aware, that plunder is the great incentive to Circassian warfare; such I know to be the generally received opinion with respect to it, founded, of course, on what has been gathered from partial statements with respect to the habits of the nation at a former period, for at present I believe there exists no doubt that the war they wage is purely defensive or retaliatory. But without entering now into the causes, hereditary and religious, which I have

already adverted to, and which, had both parties been admitted to a hearing, would, I believe, so far as the Circassians are concerned, have formed ample justification for these border hostilities, I may add, that long and attentive observation of the national character would lead me to question if at any time the love of spoil prevailed with the nation at large over that of glory, and if the former be not prized less for its intrinsic value than as a trophy of the latter.

But to return to our narrative; though the interesting and interested youth last alluded to had disappointed the expectations of Nadir, it would have been extraordinary if, among a people whose chief characteristic is an ardent love of enterprise, there had not been more kindred spirits to be found. Such was Kaplan the Tiger, a young noble in whose every lineament, and in the quiet dignity of whose dark and glowing features, romance had breathed all the spirit which the genius of a Salvator or a Radcliffe alone could do justice to. With him Nadir, though congeniality of temperament rendered the vows of friendship superfluous, was sworn brother immediately; nor had they been an hour together, ere they were holding unreserved communion as to their future plans; Kaplan declaring our friend to be an *ousta*, or proficient in the

science of taking castles, and the latter not less delighted at the promise of adventures and achievements which awaited them without number on the other side of the Kuban.

The house of the young chieftain where we had taken our lodging for the night was, from its position, in some measure associated with these subjects,—looking from its wooded nook on the hillside over the boundless prospect of the Russian steppes, as the fisherman's hut commands the view of the ocean, and presents to his eye the scene of his past toils and escapes, together with the field of future exertion. Kaplan was the most famous of the Kuban guides, one of whom is to be found at the mouth of each of its tributary streams, and whose occupation is esteemed highly honourable, involving as it does great personal risk and responsibility; since not only have they to keep their countrymen duly informed of the movements of the enemy on the frontier, but, after penetrating beyond it for the purpose of reconnoitring, to lead the way in every expedition.

It was at this very season that the guides were most actively employed; for the time was approaching when the frost would chain up the river, which had served as a moat of defence to the otherwise defenceless Khernamortsies, and

permit of forays on a more extensive scale. They had, in the mean while, either singly or at the head of small guerilla parties, swam or forded the Kuban at various points, scattering wild dismay through the adjacent provinces. Two regiments that had retired to Stavropol were, in consequence of these alarms, ordered back to Ekatorinadar.

We had also, though remaining ourselves in Circassia, ocular demonstration, singular as it may seem, of the panic then prevailing in Russia. Nadir, should these pages meet his eye, will doubtless recollect the night when, in company with Kaplan, we reconnoitred the fortress of Aboon, and frightened so cruelly from their propriety the unfortunate garrison, part of which (to the no small amusement of the Circassians, who hold Russians and pigs, as equally unclean, in the same abomination) made a desperate sally to save the swine which were feeding outside the gates, while the rest cannonaded us furiously from the walls. Night had overtaken us on our way home, after this reconnoissance, between Aboon and the Kuban; but the darkness, which had been unrelieved except by the moon in her first quarter shedding a feeble light behind the broken ridge of the lesser chain of the Caucasus, that lay black in midnight shadow below, was

suddenly dispelled by the light of a conflagration in front of us; while other fires, breaking out almost simultaneously to the right and left, lit up with an effect, grand as it was ghastly, the vast and dreary confines of the Muscovite.

These phenomena, startling as they were to us, occasioned no surprise to the Circassians, who told us they were precautions taken against surprise by the Russians. They were endeavouring, it seemed, to burn the reeds which served their enemies for ambush on the further bank of the Kuban; but these precautions the latter now laughed to scorn, for they knew they could be only very partially successful, exclaiming, by way of comment on them, "Let them quake, the *Kiafirs*! 'tis their turn to tremble now."

CHAPTER XIII.

Internal reforms among the Circassians— The National Oath—We leave the Kuban— Advance of the Yebers—Guz-Beg again— Nocturnal alarm.

VARIOUS were the hopes and fears that now agitated the minds of all who dwelt in the vicinity of the Kuban. On the one side was a peasantry exposed to the reprisals which their government had provoked, but could not protect them against; on the other an armed population, full of ardour and enterprise, eager to wipe off the scores of the preceding year, and waiting but the customary signal of their chiefs to be up and over the border to a man. But those on whom it thus depended to let loose their devastating fury, and who would have been warranted in so doing both by justice and policy, (since they equally demanded that

the Russians should be visited in turn with a portion at least of the calamities they had so unsparingly inflicted,) were at this juncture influenced by considerations, the moderation and magnanimity of which, though unappreciated by their enemies, must obtain them the sympathy of all who are not utter strangers to these sentiments. How remarkable that those whom the Russians should stigmatise as barbarians, should be the first to feel the barbarity of this exterminating warfare ; and, instead of attacking their enemies at disadvantage, employ the respite afforded by the temporary retreat of their armies in the reform of internal abuses ! These ameliorations they had been taught to consider as conditions on which assistance might be eventually obtained from England.

With a noble confidence, therefore, in the justice of their cause, inspiring them, on the one hand, with a proud contempt of their gigantic adversary, and, on the other, with a sanguine belief, which no discouragement could utterly extinguish, that neither England nor the Porte would ultimately abandon them, they now resolutely applied themselves to a measure which, in propitiating the latter, would, they declared, be of more avail to them than the capture of twenty forts, or any warlike expedition against

the former. The act they now contemplated embraced, among other objects, a solemn vindication of their national character, which had been studiously misrepresented and vilified.

It had been the view and policy of Russia, not only to sever the ties which had connected the Circassians with their Mussulman brethren, by investing that country with their armies and fleets, but to cut them off from the sympathies of the whole world, by invariably representing them as lawless hordes of barbarians. Nothing, however, could be more unfair than such statements; for though it must be admitted that the laws and institutes acknowledged by these mountaineers did not formerly interdict acts of spoliation between members of different tribes and provinces, yet the observances which they did prescribe, and which certainly sufficed for the general security of life and property, were perhaps more tenaciously adhered to than the laws are in any other country. I have heard of no instance of breach of faith when once plighted; and as to their respect for treaties, Russia herself must be a reluctant witness in their favour, and blush at the contrast afforded to it by its own perfidy. All, then, that was wanting, was the abandonment of usages which gave their enemies any colour for excluding them from the pale of civi-

lisation. The means by which so desirable a consummation was to be effected, was the administration of the national oath.

To explain the full power of the oath over the Circassians, which will, doubtless, appear marvellous to such as are strangers to their customs, I cannot do better than adopt their own definition or personification of it, there being about as much truth in the metaphors they employ as in any I ever heard. Nothing, indeed, could more widely differ than the tone of affected regret, but real exultation, with which they acknowledged there was neither king nor government in the country, than the emphatic sincerity of that with which they have as often assured us that their king was their oath. It is, in fact, the monarch—the only one—whose sway (morally and metaphorically speaking) had been submitted to, from time immemorial, in every part of the Caucasus. His seal it is that confers validity on every compact, social or political. He is the mighty arbiter in all differences—the sole lawgiver, whose authority enforces what his sanction has confirmed. All, of whatever sex or condition, are his vassals. Woe to the perjured wretch who shall betray his allegiance! A blight shall fall on him and all connected with him; his kindred perish like a tainted flock; his children, till he confess and

expiate the sacrilege, shall drop from him like mildewed ears, or withered branches from the stem; himself, if permitted to linger a while as an example, shall live a broken, conscience stricken man, a burthen to the earth and its elements, an outcast and object of abhorrence to all around him.

It will be readily believed, that the existence of so formidable a means of control has not escaped the missionaries and professors of Islamism, who have been labouring at the conversion of these provinces for the last sixty years; and that, instead of attempting to subvert, they have availed themselves of it as their most powerful auxiliary. Discarding the forms of ancient superstition, they have, to continue our metaphor, invested the majesty of the oath with the more solemn insignia of the Koran; and arming themselves in turn with its terrors, wield them successfully in their warfare with usages which, though tolerated, and in some measure demanded by the civil institutions of the country, are altogether at variance with the Mahometan law.

To renounce practices such as rapine and violence, the only means, as I have elsewhere explained, by which, in default of others, the tribes could obtain mutual redress, and which inferred, therefore, *per se*, no degree of moral turpitude,

was a sacrifice few could be induced to subscribe to. A compromise was therefore entered into, by which it was understood that only those who had specifically abjured these offences were to be excommunicated by their commission—with the proviso, however, that the oath, when it was taken, should operate not only as a security for their future good behaviour, but also retrospectively compelling them to the restitution of plundered property, and to the payment of a fine as an acknowledgment for each offence.

There was, of course, under these circumstances, a general reluctance to take it; and the struggle between the more rigid Mussulmans and the party of the recusants, who far exceed them in number, had been carried on with great pertinacity, though with indifferent success on the side of the former, for nearly half a century. The means adopted to enforce it were in accordance with the primitive manners of the nation. A number of influential chiefs or elders, forming themselves into a body, would proceed on horseback, with a *cadi* or magistrate at their head, to the various streams and hamlets, and having summoned a council at each of these places, endeavour to prevail on their inhabitants to take the oath. Occasionally, when they could not be

persuaded by fair means, rougher arguments were resorted to, and the disputants would take to cudgelling each other. But this sort of altercation was seldom attended with fatal results; and to characterise it more fully as a strife among brethren, it was humorously called by them "the war of the whips." Such had been the anomalous state of these provinces while they preserved their connexion with Turkey, and before Anapa had been finally surrendered to the Russians; and up to this time, though its dissemination was jealously promoted by the pachas of that fortress, (one of whom, Hassan Pacha, headed a party of Yebers, as those who administered it were styled in person,) the oath had made little progress.

Not so, however, after the withdrawal of Turkey's protection, which the reforming party did not fail to represent as the immediate consequence of their contumacy. For it followed that their only chance of recovering it, together with the more powerful assistance of England, was a spontaneous submission to the obligations they had hitherto so stubbornly refused to incur. But that which chiefly confirmed them in this humiliating view of their position, and the salutary reaction resulting from it, was an event

which occurred in the summer of 1834, an epoch destined to be ever memorable in the annals of these countries.

It was then that Mr. Urquhart, the first Englishman who had visited them, landing among them in the hour of need like a "*deus ex machina*," from the cutter "Turquoise," in addressing the assembled multitude on the plains of Anapa, told them that as an indispensable condition of countenance and support from England, which he promised them his best endeavours to obtain, they should begin by renouncing the feuds, and the predatory habits which had been the consequence of them, between the various tribes and provinces, and that while Russia persisted in making war upon them, they should on no account sanction the commerce which had been opened with them, as a bait no doubt, and with the most sinister intentions. The effect of these exhortations was most powerful and instantaneous—more so, perhaps, than he who made them could have anticipated, or has since been aware of. The seed thus scattered with a hasty hand, has produced a harvest of beneficial consequences, for extent, and rapidity of growth, unexampled in history. The commerce with Anapa, which had already inundated the country with spies and Russian agents, was summarily

suppressed; all intercourse with the Russians was prohibited under the severest penalties. But not only were these precautions taken against danger from without, but, as a pledge of their desire to establish the good order that had been recommended to them, they determined to impose the oath on the whole population.

It was accordingly administered to every adult in Natu-koitch, and the elders had succeeded in imposing it as far as Azips, the fifth district of Shapsook eastward, when, either from the resistance of the inhabitants, which threatened a civil war if they persisted, or the sudden invasion of the Russians, their progress had been there interrupted. The effect of the oath, and the contrast afforded, during the last few years, between the sworn and the unsworn districts, was almost miraculous, the former being as remarkable for the unanimity and good order which prevailed in them, as the latter were for their misrule, and reckless communication with the Russians, through the neutral province of Zadoog.

The Russian government, aware of the expediency of cultivating these dispositions, and finding the door closed to her commerce in one direction, had accordingly attempted to open it in another, and recently established a mart on the further

bank of the Kuban, opposite the embouchure of the stream of Ashtook, under the auspices of a renegade Circassian, on whom had been conferred the rank of colonel in its service. A Russian party had during the last month been clandestinely formed in Shapsook; and though, as I have related, the ringleaders of the faction had been summarily dealt with by Mansour and Shamiz, the contamination, with the demoralisation which was said to keep pace with it, had spread too far in the community to be eradicated by any means but one—the infallible remedy for all disorders—the much dreaded ordeal of the oath.

It was with some surprise that we heard the design, now positively announced to us by Hadji-oli Effendi, of marching on the contumacious district of Azips. The worthy judge, while we seemed to have a warlike expedition in view, had been by no means the foremost of our party: war was not his element, unless it might be the war of the whips, in which, not less than that of words, he was a match for any man, and to which sort of strife, as we were now proceeding, he bravely headed our band as its Coryphæus. Sometimes, also, he had to bring up the rear as its whipper-in; for many of them, particularly the Deli-Kans, not relishing this change in our destination, showed a disposition to desert. The

task of setting their own house in order was not nearly so much to their taste as that of rummaging that of their enemy.

For our part, as we began more fully to comprehend the importance of the pacific crusade on which we were bound, and to the success of which, as Englishmen and friends to the country, we could so materially contribute by our presence ; we did not hesitate to lend the judge the whole weight of our influence ; still it was not without considerable regret, and many a lingering look behind at the Kuban, that Nadir bade adieu to his brave companions, and the projects they had formed together on its banks. He was destined, however, to fall into still greater temptation. The day after we had parted from the Tiger, whom should we meet pacing majestically over the plain of Adheucum but the old lion Hadji Guz-Beg ; he was attended by his squire and a page, leading a spare charger. After the customary salutations, which were performed on foot, we remounted our horses and rode on together. It was not every day that we fell in with such a hero as the Hadji, and the least we could do was to have a carouse with him, for which purpose stood very opportunely at hand the house of our old acquaintance Attukoi, where we knew from experience we should always be heartily

welcome—for a consideration. I should have mentioned that the ingenious gentleman last spoken of had been hanging about us for some time in the pleasing expectation of some profitable transaction with Nadir, whose wealth and munificence had attracted him, in the way of presents. This time, however, he did not trust entirely for success to the appliances of his table: the extent of his expectations was proved by the magnitude of his bait, and a horse of some value which he made over to him, with much fuss and galimatias, turned out a highly lucrative speculation. Having established a claim by his gift, his importunity thenceforward knew no bounds, and the only means by which Nadir could escape from it, after presenting him in the mean while with twice the worth of his horse, was to restore it to him.

The banquet he provided us consisted, as usual, of the fat of a land flowing with milk and honey, washed down by endless bowls of boza and backsima. Leaving the other guests to drench themselves *ad libitum* with the former, we joined the Hadji, whose challenge we could not courteously decline, in copious libations of the latter. It was a potent sort of mead, which, though not so unpalatable, was much more intoxicating. But whatever its strength, he was determined, apparently, to try it against that of our heads, an

experiment in which, probably because they had been seasoned by much stronger potations than he or his friends were accustomed to, he was fairly worsted by us.

The innovation produced by the good liquor began soon to display itself in the various frolics and extravagances which usually mark the progressive triumph of the jolly god in Circassia. At each successive bumper, which, to his ludicrous dismay, he found it more difficult to grapple with, he, in token of fair play, after draining it to the bottom, reversed his goblet, and then, to give vent to the feelings by which he was overpowered, he fired his pistol through the roof of the guest-house. The last feat seemed to delight every body but our worthy host, whose attempt at laughter, as he eyed the damage sustained by his rafters, the parlour splendours of his guest-house, was the most woful that can be imagined. Many were disposed to follow the Hadji's example, but he summarily protested against it, declaring the Hadji to be a privileged person. The vanquished hero, thus caught in his own toils, was eventually conducted to bed amid the roars of the company.

The judge, who, contrary to custom, had been a dry-lipped spectator of the revel, now rose and summoned us hastily to horse ; he had been by no means pleased at our rencontre with the Hadji, in

whom he beheld a rival no less able than disposed to weaken his party of *Yebers*, by draughting them into a troop for a warlike expedition under his own banner. Nor were his apprehensions altogether unfounded. The Hadji had had several private consultations with Nadir, and, though disapproving of his plan of a night attack, as opposed to the usages of the Circassians, who are personally under no obligation of military service, and whose chief incentive is emulation, while combating in the sight of their countrymen, had on his side suggested more than one enterprise, the execution of which would have necessarily made him a truant from the *Yeber* expedition of Hadjioli. The latter, therefore, taking advantage of the momentary confusion of the enemy, determined, like a prudent general, to draw off his forces; but an old soldier like the Hadji was not so easily imposed upon. Information, it seemed, had been conveyed to him of our movements; and we had scarcely proceeded a quarter of a mile on our way, when at a turning of the road we were briskly assailed by a body of dismounted Deli-Kans, armed each of them as when Birnain wood marched upon Dunsinane, with a branch of a tree. With these weapons they threw themselves pell-mell, and screaming like so many fiends, among our horses; but this was not all, for

while pressed thus vigorously in front, we were menaced at the same time by alarms in our rear, where the Hadji himself, breaking through a fence, appeared pistol and sword in hand at the head of another party. But there was not much about the lion to inspire terror just then, for he had not had time to gird up his loins since the recent revel, and staggering in his gait, and disordered in his dress, he had much less the port of a Mars than a Silenus at that moment. We had little difficulty, therefore, in escaping from his clutches; the less so, perhaps, that he had himself no serious intention of detaining us, but merely wished to prove to us it was not so easy to steal a march upon him.

From the Adheucum we advanced towards the Aboon, where, on a plain near the confines of the two provinces there was that day a great crowd of people assembled, it appeared, to celebrate the funeral feast of some person of distinction. The judge had taken us there in hopes, among such a multitude, of recruiting the ranks of our party, which, for the object he had in view, was certainly deficient both in numbers and influence; but he met with no great encouragement. The oath was not popular in these parts; and though we were personally received with the usual marks of deference, ushered by the stewards

to the most distinguished places, and treated to the *primitiæ* of the feast, Hadjioli succeeded in making few proselytes. There were many, it was evident, who, far from assisting to impose the oath on others, had decided objections to taking it themselves; and, ready as they might be to swear hostility to the Russians, had no idea of relinquishing their private feuds. We were ourselves witnesses on that very day to an incident which proved the determination with which they were still prosecuted. A man, passing at full gallop a group of pedestrians on the plain, deliberately fired his pistol at one of them, who instantly fell down wounded in the leg. It had been the object of the assailant to maim, and not to kill his victim; thus discharging with a shot the balance of some unsettled account between their tribes. Our body of Yebers, therefore, though composed in great measure of highly respectable Tamatas or elders, yet, for the undertaking we were embarked in, a comparative handful, advanced boldly to administer the obnoxious oath to a refractory district consisting of upwards of 10,000 inhabitants. We were met on the threshold of their province, it is true, as we crossed the Aboon, by several of the leading men of Shapsook, among whom was Slez Oglou Nazwa; but all these worthies, disposed as they

might be to second our views, yet, better acquainted with the resistance to be expected, grew every day more lukewarm and irresolute.

Their only answer to the arguments and exhortations addressed to them by Hadjioli, was an allusion to the insignificance of our party, or a demand why Shamiz or Mansour had not accompanied it. The name of the latter in particular was evidently a tower of strength, which it was most ominous to the success of our expedition to lack. After passing, therefore, on our way, the streams of Bogondour, Shebig, and Whoff, at each of which the judge had assembled a council ring, and harangued it "from morn till dewy eve" to very little purpose, we found the numbers of our train, instead of being augmented, very considerably thinned by desertion. The indignation of Hadjioli at the apathy and backwardness of the Shapsookians now scarcely knew any bounds. The success of the undertaking we were engaged in, he had, on personal as well as public grounds, very much at heart; for not to mention the fines levied for past offences by those who administered the oath, and of which he was himself entitled to a lion's share, its immediate tendency, by a more rigid enforcement of the laws of Islamism, was to extend his authority as its chief judge in Circassia. Long and loudly did he inveigh against the

turbulence of his countrymen, whom he declared to have no stomach for anything but fighting—a propensity, which forgetting apparently how useful it was under existing circumstances, or thinking, perhaps, that swearing would fully answer the same purpose, he held in the greatest abhorrence.

The grudge he bore against all martialists and lads of mettle had before displayed itself in his hostility to Tougouse, whose reformation he had treated with the most scornful incredulity ; and it was with a degree of malicious triumph, which he was at no pains to disguise, that he now informed us of the report which was current with regard to our minion, as he termed him. He had been at some of his wild pranks again, it was said, having made free with some cattle belonging to the people of Zadoog. But there were others who warmly defended Tougouse in his absence, and declared that, if he had stolen the beasts, he could no doubt show good and sufficient cause for the robbery. It was certain that the judge was disposed to show him little favour, and it was hard to say whether he disliked him or Hadgi Guz-Beg the most.

He was deceived, however, in thinking that he had entirely rid himself of the latter. The evening of our arrival at Whoff, while we were

reposing ourselves at the blazing hearth of our house, our attention was suddenly drawn to a brisk discharge of fire-arms, with its usual accompaniment of yells, in the immediate neighbourhood of the house. The alarm which such a tumult at an hour so unseasonable was calculated to create, was removed by the assurances of the company, who said it could be nothing but a marriage, it being customary, when the bridegroom elopes with his lady, to get up a sham fight on the occasion. But this surmise proved also incorrect, and further conjectures were cut short by the Hadji in person, who, it seems, had taken this obstreperous way of announcing himself, and who now, throwing open the door, marched merrily at the head of his satellites into the apartment. He had not yet given up his design of an expedition, and was doggedly bent on recruiting his army, as he called it, at the expense of the judge's.

He had this time brought with him a singular but powerful coadjutor in a blind old minstrel, the most famous in Circassia, and one whose persuasions were of more avail in the raising of men, than the eloquence of any Sergeant Kite in Christendom. An amateur in the art of minstrelsy, the Hadji was a liberal patron to its professors; and judging of the general effect of their strains

from that which they produced on himself, their praises in fact being the breath of his nostrils, he was for the most part, when engaged in raising a war-party, attended by his favourite troubadour, who, together with his fiddle, was transported from place to place on the crupper of his attendant's steed. As I have already given my readers a specimen of Circassian minstrelsy, I shall not attempt a version of the song we now heard. Suffice it to say, it breathed, as usual, considerable pathos and spirit, blended sometimes with quaint humour and sarcasm. Most of these effusions were extemporaneous, and contained allusions to ourselves and other people present : but the best criterion of their merit was the impression they made upon the audience, whose chorus, at the close of every verse which he recited, rather than sang, in a quiet earnest tone, grew louder and more enthusiastic, while the minstrel himself, his wrinkled and faded countenance flushed and upturned, and his sightless eyeballs " in a fine frenzy rolling," sate like one completely rapt and inspired in the midst of them. We gave him, when he had concluded, for our share of encouragement, a piece of merchandise, for which we had, in the bargain, a promise of being immortalized in a song composed to our especial honour. But neither the strains of this Timo-

theus, nor those of the Hadji himself, who, seizing the fiddle, sang the joys of martyrdom with a zest that was almost irresistible, could shake our resolution, or seduce us from the more useful expedition in which we were already embarked. The utmost he could do was to prevail on Nadir to accompany him the next morning to a wedding. The judge, on his arrival, finding the latter gone, flew into a violent passion; nor did he recover his temper till the return of the supposed deserter in the evening.

Everything, in fact, in this stage of our proceedings, prognosticated a failure. We had reached the stream of Ant Kur, the next but one to that of Azips, to which the nearer we drew, the more sensible we became of the resistance we had to expect. This had hitherto been of a passive character, the people, for the most part, keeping sullenly aloof from us; but we were now told of threats of violence, which some individuals of the district in question, made desperate by the prospect of the oath, had been known to utter against us. We were also disheartened in some measure by the now but ill-concealed reluctance of many to entertain us; and never since our arrival in Circassia had we, to my thinking, experienced so cold a welcome as that with which we were received at a solitary farm on the Ant Kur. This

reception was, however, in keeping with the cheerless looks of the place itself; homestead and brook being strewn with the wrecks of their dismantled grove, and rendered still more dismal by the early scowl of a December's evening.

It was in leaving us there for the night, and announcing to us that, unless matters took an entirely different turn, we should have to retreat on the morrow upon Natu-koitch, that the judge, with some embarrassment, recommended us not to lay aside our arms, but to keep them at least within reach of us.

It may appear strange, perhaps, that deeming this warning necessary, he did not provide us with a guard; but this would have been an unpardonable insult to our host, who was alone answerable for our safety. However this might be, what we had heard was not calculated to act as an opiate, and it was late before sleep had taken entire possession of our cabin. The first who yielded to its influence was Mr. Bell; Nadir and myself, reclined on our beds, and conversing by the huge red logs of our half-extinguished fire, on subjects which, when distant from home, are peculiarly interesting to Englishmen, had protracted our vigils much beyond the usual hour, when we were all at once alarmed by the sound of footsteps and the whispering of

voices under the eaves of the guest-house. These had scarcely ceased, when a noise was heard at the door, which it was evident some one was attempting on the outside; but it was firmly secured by a large wooden pin, and resisted the efforts made to force it open. We in the meanwhile prepared ourselves to give the best reception we could to our unseasonable visitors. As the most essential precaution, Nadir hastened to put out the remains of the fire, the light of which, if it should come to an exchange of shots with the assailants outside, would give them a decided advantage over us. We then waited the sequel of the adventure in silence, which for some moments was as undisturbed without as within. It was at length interrupted by the blows of a hatchet, evidently employed in cutting wood from the adjacent copse. Our next suspicion, therefore, a still more alarming one, was, that it was the intention of our besiegers to set fire to our lodging, and murder us while in the act of escaping from it. But, after listening in deep suspense for some time, we were gradually reassured, and silence and darkness producing their usual effects, we were soon soundly asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

Explanation of our nocturnal disturbance—Better prospects—
Shahin-Gheri—Battle of the Whips—the Rhamazan—Winter
quarters at Shahin-Gheri's.

It was broad daylight when I was suddenly roused from my slumbers by the jovial accents, mixed with the loud laughter, of a voice that was familiar to me, and the next moment, ere well awake, found myself in the powerful hug of the friendly Wolf. The mystery of the preceding night was now fully explained. Tougouse, in returning from the province of Zadoog, whence he and his companions were then driving home a rich reprisal of horn cattle, had been informed of our advance into Shapsook, and had, immediately on receiving the intelligence, sought out our konac.

Arriving there at midnight, he had, in his impatience to see us, endeavoured to obtain instant admission, but not succeeding in his attempt, he and his companions had cut themselves some wood, struck a light, and bivouacked round the fire till morning. Hence the nocturnal noises and our alarm. An explanation which proved still more satisfactory, and which the judge himself could not impugn, related to the incursion into Zadoog. Far from incurring censure, Tougouse, it seems, deserved the thanks of the whole population of Natu-koitch, whose collective wrongs he had taken upon himself to redress. Two Armenian merchants of that province having been plundered by the Zadoogians, he had, to make sure of an indemnity, distrained some of their cattle; so that, instead of breaking the law, he had shown a praiseworthy alacrity in enforcing it, having at the same time the unalloyed satisfaction of sweeping off a whole herd of oxen and buffaloes, with justice on his side and a safe conscience.

He volunteered also, in proof of his zeal, to join us in our march upon Azips; and Hadjioli himself, aware of the assistance so tall a fellow might be to him in the war of the whips, in which, by-the-bye, he had before distinguished himself, was fain to accept his services. He was the

more disposed to reconciliation, perhaps, that our enterprise, I mean that of the Yebers, seemed unexpectedly on the eve of triumph. The clouds that but the day before had lowered so ominously upon it were suddenly dispersed, all difficulties had vanished, and we had from that time, with the exception of a few squalls at Azips, fair weather and plain sailing.

All the elders and judges in council now discovered both zeal and unanimity in promoting our views. A messenger arrived the same morning from Mansour Bey at Sebebzi, enjoining us on no account to relax our efforts, the success of which he had so much at heart; that, rather than they should miscarry, he would have himself, notwithstanding the state of his foot, and derogatory as it might prove to him as a warrior, transported to the scene of controversy, like a woman in an araba. But the circumstance which of all others wrought this sudden change in our prospects, and in the dispositions of the Shapsookians, was the timely and effective co-operation of a chieftain who, though we had hitherto seen nothing of him, had been, we were told, since the expulsion of the Abbates, by far the most influential noble in the province.

His name was Shahin-Gheri, of the tribe of Nemery. The reason he had not visited us, was

simply that he was at feud with our host Shamiz, and consequently embroiled with the whole tribe of Chippakow, by various members of which we had, since our arrival, been more or less surrounded.

The feud in question was of domestic origin. Shahin-Gheri had taken to wife a sister of Shamiz, a dame, it would seem, of a somewhat fickle and shrewish disposition, who, after some years cohabitation with her husband, had, on repairing to her brother's house on pretence of a visit, obstinately refused to return to him. After some ineffectual remonstrances, Shahin-Gheri formally demanded the restitution of his spouse, or the price he had originally paid for her. But he of Chippakow, declining to coerce his sister, or to refund what he had received for her, and which, according to his version of the story, was little or nothing, Shahin-Gheri, who, it was intimated to her, was not the man to "carry coals" for the pleasure of any other, be he who he might, in Circassia, proceeded, after the custom in such cases, to do himself justice. He had forthwith, by way of a practical hint to his brother-in-law, waylaid one of his serfs, stripped him of his arms, and as much of his clothing as he could decently dispense with, and sent him home, in this primitive state, with his compliments to his master.

This outrage of course amounted to a declaration of war, not only between the principals in this affair, but also between the respective tribes of Nemery and Chippakow. If Shamiz had not sought immediate satisfaction for this affront, if years even had left it unredressed, this was by no means viewed, by those who best knew the old Ouzden, as a proof that he had forgotten it.

Such were the causes which involving Shahin-Gheri in a mortal feud with the whole of the Chippakows, had long excluded him from the national council in which the influence of that tribe predominated. To a high-spirited and ambitious chieftain like him, this proscription must have been peculiarly galling. Now, therefore, that a band of Yebers, under the auspices of the illustrious strangers, from whose society, though he had heard so much of them, he had hitherto been banished, were holding their deliberations in his immediate neighbourhood, he determined, at any sacrifice of his personal resentments, to lend his aid to an enterprise, the success of which, he was aware, he could at this critical moment ensure by his countenance. The steps he adopted in pursuance of these generous resolves were, as befitted them, equally frank and straightforward. Riding up to the council-ring, where the Yebers were engaged in earnest discussion, he, to the astonish-

ment of the circle, dismounted in the midst of them. The number of the Chippakows present was three,—the judge Hajioli, the freedman Ongasoff, and the boy Chenetlook.

The conduct of these individuals, all bound, when they met him, to take summary vengeance on the enemy of their tribe, was different as it was characteristic. The judge, engaged at that very moment in a task which had for its object the suppression of strife and bloodshed, felt naturally averse to violence even in the prosecution of a rightful feud; but it was no easy matter to reconcile his duty as a Mussulman *cadi* with that of a true member of the tribe of Chippakow. By way of compromise, therefore, he resolutely turned his head another way, and then, as if summoned by urgent business to the other side of the hedge, absconded as nimbly as he could. The behaviour of Ongasoff was, though from different motives, not less circumspect. The freedman, besides that he was not of a sanguinary disposition, felt the rein of more than one prudential consideration,—he had other things in keeping than his master's honour, and knew to a nicety the number of horned cattle then grazing on his master's pastures. Two hundred of them, he was aware, would be the amount of blood indemnity, and so large a hole in the live stock,

the inevitable consequence of that, be it ever so small, he should perforate with his rifle in the body of Shahin-Gheri. Troubled apparently by these reflections, he fumbled with his piece in a manner that, for a Circassian who is trained to draw it with peculiar alertness from its felt covering, was singularly awkward and dilatory. Not so, however, Chenetlook.

In Shahin-Gheri, the single-hearted lad saw but the enemy of his father and his tribe; his weapon was out, and levelled at him in a trice, and but for the prompt interference of a bystander who wrested it from his hands, he would in the paternal quarrel have brought down his paternal uncle with as little remorse as a wild duck or a Russian. But the latter, intimating by voice and gesture that his intentions were pacific, proposed that the judge himself should fix the compensation due from him for the spoliation of his slave to Shamiz, and that without reference to the provocation he had received, and which he promised to overlook. These difficulties removed, Shahin-Gheri was next, amidst the praises and jubilee of the whole company, introduced to us as one who desired by all means in his power to promote the administration of the oath, or any measure we might recommend for the public advantage. On these subjects, as if to indemnify

himself for past restraint, he launched forth at great length, and with much volubility expressed the most unbounded devotion to us personally; nor could we but feel flattered, and in some degree moved, at the deep mortification he said he had experienced in being so long debarred access to us, or at the abortive attempts he had made, undertaking long journeys, and hovering about us continually at Pchad and Adheucum to obtain an interview,—attempts which had been constantly defeated by the jealous vigilance of the Chippakows. In short, the zeal and earnestness of our new adherent were such as, notwithstanding his mean figure, hatchet face, and ungraceful address, to prepossess us completely in his favour; he was one of those persons in whom restless energy of character supplies all personal deficiencies, and eminently qualifies for a leader of the populace.

No sooner had he openly espoused our cause, than his example operated as a charm upon the whole district. Our affairs from that moment went on swimmingly;—and when we advanced the day after to the next stream, that on which he himself resided, the Happle, we must have had, reckoning horse and foot, half the memleket at our heels. At the konac in which we put up there, we were received, much to our surprise, by a salvo of artillery. The patriarch of the hamlet,

who had flourished in it upwards of a century, piqued himself on his skill as an engineer. His hobby was a great gun that had been taken from the Russians, and which, being now in his second childhood, he was accustomed to ride with no little complacency, founding on it many notable projects for the demolition of the castle of Nicolai. His only difficulty, he told us, arose from the great distance of that fort, and the impossibility of transporting his heavy piece of ordnance to a position whence he could conveniently batter it. Thus his time had been occupied in marching and countermarching (his legs being fortunately in more vigorous preservation than his intellects) between the gun and the fortress—though failing hitherto, as the fruit of his marches and cogitations, to bring them an inch nearer to each other. Had he known the facility with which my Lords Durham and Palmerston had, in order to make out a case for the seizure of the Vixen, shifted the castle of Doba to Soujak Kalé, he would, perhaps, not have despaired of bringing the fortress to the gun, however difficult he found it to convey the gun to the fortress.

It was a grand sight to see the old Trojan let off his gun. This was a feat which the scarcity of gunpowder rendered of very rare occurrence ; and we, in whose honour the unwonted explosion

was to take place, were not a little surprised, on cantering into the churchyard, to see him with his household beat to quarters, capering with a lighted match over the touch-hole. The affair, I am happy to say, went off with great *éclat*, and the report, considering the modicum of power employed to produce it, was as loud as could be expected. We left Happle the next day with powerful reinforcements, but they did not accompany us all the way to Azips, being intended only for a demonstration, which, in thus making their sentiments known, would render further coercion towards the refractory district unnecessary. We were told also there were exceptions there to the general profligacy ; and several secret partisans of the oath, who, though hitherto silenced and intimidated, only waited our arrival to declare themselves.

Our reception, however, though we encountered no open opposition, proved anything but flattering. We saw few people on the road, and the countenances of such as we met looked anxious and moody. The effect of the oath we came to administer being to make them disgorge much of their ill-gotten substance, it went sadly against their stomachs. In the number of the righteous, who certainly did not abound at Azips, was a brave and independent Tokav of the name

of Mustapha, who despising the intimidation resorted to by his neighbours, had boldly invited us to his house; but our enemies, finding him proof against their threats, had next had recourse to calumny. So manifold and abominable were the charges which in the extremity of their wrath they had heaped upon us, that honest Mustapha found himself, in receiving us, in a state of no small perplexity. The manner in which he scrutinized us, squatting himself *vis-à-vis*, and bending on us a pair of piercing black eyes, was certainly not the most civil in the world; and when, after some scrutiny, he would bounce up and leave the apartment, and then return to take another stare at us, we began to have serious doubts as to the state of his intellects. On further acquaintance, and after we had conversed together for some time through our dragoman, our opinion of one another was mutually improved. We, on our part, discovered him to be a fine intelligent fellow; and he, as usually happens with men of quick and ardent dispositions, finding he had lent too ready an ear to our detractors, became from that moment our warmest and most faithful adherent. Nor was it long ere he took an opportunity of unequivocally displaying his sentiments.

The next morning the Yebers were confronted with their opponents, who met them in formida-

ble array on the banks of the Azips. The most respectable elders of that district had not hesitated to side with our party, and to declare themselves for the oath; but some of the graybeards, and a great majority of the "wild bloods," still obstinately set their faces against it. The latter, confiding in their numbers, became at length, as the debate proceeded, more and more insolent; their indignation was particularly directed against ourselves, whom they looked upon as the prime movers of all the mischief. Many declared that, knowing the unfriendly purpose for which we had come among them, it was an unneighbourly act for any who resided on that stream to harbour us; and one of these youthful orators, in the heat of argument, so far forgot himself as to threaten (in a coarse Turkish phrase peculiarly offensive to Circassian ears) dishonour to the mothers of all who should receive us into their houses. The menace of this unlucky wight at once roused the lion in our worthy host Mustapha, who, having already entertained us, seemed personally obnoxious to the threat. He had at first, being a man of few words, allowed Shahin-Gheri, Hadjioli, and others, to try the effect of persuasion; but now, exclaiming that the whole troop of them were kiafirs, renegades, and no true Mussulmans, threw himself sabre in hand into the thickest

of them. The consequence would certainly have been serious, had he not been promptly disarmed by his friends; but though deadly weapons might be excluded from the war of the whips, there was no unlawful impediment to the use of an oaken cudgel, and with this, our friend Mustapha, having substituted it for his broadsword, proceeded to lay about him with such vigour and effect, that three of the nonjurors lay sprawling in the mud of their own native streamlet in less than so many seconds.

This onset proved a signal for a general engagement, in which the Yebers, owing probably to the confidence inspired by a good cause, gained a complete victory. Their adversaries, fairly thumped into acquiescence, were fain to capitulate, and, having assembled once more in council, to reconsider the propriety of conforming to the wishes of the Yebers. Nor, on second thoughts, were they long in making up their minds in the affirmative, for they were menaced with coercive measures, by the people of Happle on the one side, and on the other by those who, dwelling farther eastward on the Yil, had not yet taken the oath, and from whom, while the council was still hesitating, a deputation arrived, a "Hallo ahead," as Nadir described it, intimating not only their own readiness to take it, but the pleasure they would feel

in forcing it down the throats of all recusants, and, if necessary, setting fire to their habitations. These concurrent circumstances proved decisive; further resistance was abandoned, and the triumphant Yebers proceeded, according to their own phrase, to hang up the Koran, and to administer the oath to every adult from the source to the mouth of the Azips. So complete indeed was the prostration of the opposite party, that when we left the house of the doughty Mustapha, we were next quartered, by way of bravado or retributive justice, in that of the most malignant among them, who was thus compelled to

“ Produce his choicest cheer,
And hoard his curses till the coast was clear.”

Such a *kiafir*, as the judge jocosely remarked, might thank his stars he had been let off so cheaply, and that we had not made an additional demand for *dish parasi*, (a premium for the free use of our teeth.) Among other irregularities, our host, we were informed, had been much addicted to horse-stealing, and we found, even in the apartment where we lodged, a very suspicious article—that is, a long *lasso*, or noose, of a modern and ingenious construction, for snaring and catching horses. He appeared, in the mean while, in very low spirits, for he knew his turn would soon

come to take the oath, when he would not only have to confess all his past delinquencies, but pay handsomely for them in the way of penalties.

We had now reached the 29th of November, which was the first day of the Rhamazan. To avoid scandal, and at the same time to accommodate our entertainers, who would otherwise have been obliged to provide separate meals for us, we determined to observe the fast with them. We breakfasted, therefore, at sunset—dined at midnight—got up to supper an hour before day-break—and then slept as long as we could into the following day. The length of the day to which the fasting is restricted, was then not more than nine hours, so that this revolution in our habits was of little consequence. It was strongly objected to, however, by our two Polish servants, who represented to us that, as good Catholics, it went decidedly against their conscience to keep Mahometan fasts. We accordingly gave orders, though they had not otherwise given any particular proofs of their Christian spirit, unless it were making it a plea for precedence over our Moslem servants, that they should be provided with food in the day-time. But there was still a point upon which our conscientious followers could not agree, and this was not as to fasting, but feasting; to which, one of them was of opi-

nion, there could be no orthodox objection at any time ; and, to the great scandal of the other, gorged himself day and night during the whole Rhamazan.

I mention this incident, trifling as it may appear, to show, unless control be exercised on one side or another, how difficult it is for people, who are the mere creatures of their respective habits and appetites, to live in harmony together. Every difference of this sort is a point of collision, and the reader may thence form some opinion as to the practicability of establishing independent bodies of Poles in the Caucasus.

As we understood it would take at least two or three weeks to administer the oath to all the inhabitants of this district, we accepted the invitation of Shahin-Gheri to pass the interval at his house. We retired, therefore, on the 3rd of December, to the Happle, where he lived in the best style of the country, and where he now spared no pains to make us comfortable. The chief appliances to this purpose, at this season of the year, were an abundance of winter provision for man and horse, a large stock of coverlids, couches, &c. ; and, what was still more important, a stack of firewood which, as it may be had in any quantity for the cutting, is heaped with an unsparing hand on the pile, that is kept blazing

night and day upon the hearth of the guest-house. These large fires were highly desirable—for, not to mention the slightrness of the building itself, the door, which hospitality forbids our host to close, remains open during the whole day, even in the depth of winter. We were attended to our new quarters by our youthful squire, Chenetlook. The freedman Ougasoff had been despatched, by Shahin - Gheri, with the olive branch and terms of accommodation to Shamiz at Semez. Chenetlook, in the mean while, having for the present abandoned all idea of shooting his uncle, did not hesitate to take up his abode with him, delighted, apparently, to renew acquaintance with his son, a youth of his own age and standing. The lads, as is customary here, swore eternal friendship, and were thenceforward inseparables—pursuing their sports together during the day, and sleeping on the same mat at night. They had, moreover, in the course of a week, exchanged not only the vows aforesaid, but, *more majorum*, almost every article of their accoutrements and wearing apparel.

We were not the only guests at the house of Shahin-Gheri. We found, temporarily established there, a Tocav from Natu-koitch, who had offended against the laws by intermarrying

into his own tribe—that of Natquo. He had eloped with his bride into this part of the country, and was now living under the protection of Shahin-Gheri.

CHAPTER XV.

Administration of the Oath—Squabbles among the Yebers—Inaction of the Circassians—Their gathering for an inroad into the Russian territory—The nocturnal march—The result.

THE weather had now become exceedingly severe, the thermometer being at sixteen degrees below zero Fahrenheit, and the whole landscape swathed thickly in snow. We were left, notwithstanding our snug winter-quarters, by Mr. Bell. He returned to Natu-koitch for the two-fold purpose of visiting Mansour, who had suffered a relapse since our departure, and of summoning a fresh force among the chiefs and elders, in order to relieve the Yebers who had come with us, and whose protracted absence from their families at this season of the year was attended with great inconvenience to them.

The administration of the oath to the people of Azips occupied upwards of a month, in the course of which Nadir and myself went frequently to witness the proceedings. Our reception on these occasions was kind and even cordial; the popular tide had now turned in our favour. The multitude, I believe, rarely trouble themselves about consistency; and it would certainly have been invidious to inquire too nicely what had become of those who opposed us so fiercely a week before, since we should, in all probability, have identified them with the very persons who were now the foremost to welcome us. The Circassians, I should add, are not a vindictive race; and this, as I have before observed, is in great measure owing to the nature of their customs, which do not even exact blood for blood, unless other compensation has been withheld. The ceremony of taking the oath, which was curious to us as spectators, had a deep and thrilling interest for those who were engaged in it. We perceived, on first attending it, what was meant by hanging the Koran. Two copies of that book were suspended by cords to a wooden frame erected in the snow. It had, to our eyes, much the look of a gibbet, but was regarded with feelings of the profoundest veneration by the superstitious multitude. Even those who

were engaged at mark-firing in a neighbouring field, cast ever and anon expressive glances at it; for on this simple apparatus was enthroned the tremendous majesty of the oath, and around it were marshalled the chieftains, elders, and judges of the land; while, one by one, the humbled population of that district presented themselves before it, and having abjured all traffic and communication with the Russians, all rapine and violence among themselves, made a public confession of all their former transgressions. These practices, as I have before had occasion to observe, inferred of themselves no degree of infamy, unless they had been previously renounced by oath, so that there was nothing very humiliating in the acknowledgment of them. That which was felt more severely was the payment of fines; but, however heavy their amount, none sought to evade them by perjury; and it was a truly affecting spectacle to see the gray-headed warrior, whose scars proclaimed him a stranger to fear of every other description, thus powerfully agitated before the dread volume of the Mussulman law, and depositing his rifle, his bow, or his pistol, in proof of his sincerity.

The disposal of all these fines and confiscations proved a business of some difficulty; for, after they had grown into a goodly heap, they became

naturally the objects of cupidity and contention. It was usual in such cases to distribute them among the whole body of the Yebers, but in this instance it appeared those of Shapsook had somewhat greedily sought to appropriate them, alleging that Hadjioli and his companions from Natu-koitch were interlopers, who had no right to enrich themselves at the expense of their province; but the latter, declaring they were the original promoters of the oath, and that without their instrumentality it would never have been set afoot, insisted on a fair and equitable division. The debate on this subject waxed very warm, and there was some danger that the whips which had hitherto been wielded in the holy war against the opponents of the oath would, for the sake of a little inglorious pelf, be applied in "civil cudgel" to the shoulders of its pious administrators. They were prevented, however, from proceeding to such disgraceful lengths by the reasonable forbearance of Hadjioli, who, though apparently waving his pretensions, determined to try what could be done by stratagem. The Shapsookians were the dupes, and we the unwitting instruments of his artifice.

The day after this discussion, with respect to which we had been left wholly in the dark, Hassan the Tocay, having received his cue from

him, appeared before us with a long face at Happle; and declaring there was no doing any good with such incorrigible scum as the people of Azips, who had again rebelled against the oath, announced his intention of washing his hands of the business, and withdrawing forthwith to Natu-koitch. This intelligence with respect to the oath, which we had been previously informed had been taken by three-fourths of the refractory district, and would, as a matter of course, meet with no opposition from the rest, occasioned us great disappointment and surprise. It was fully confirmed, however, by Hadjioli, who next made his appearance, looking still more disconsolate, and inveighing still more bitterly against the nonjurors, whom he called all the rogues, pimps, atheists, and other epithets, which his proficiency in Turkish made him very fluent in. The only chance of bringing them to their senses, he said, would be for us to lecture them ourselves, and he besought us to accompany him for that purpose to the *Medjilis*. We accordingly, in compliance with his request, repaired once more to Azips, and mustering all my Turkish, I let loose on the assembly (having been well loaded and primed by Hadjioli himself) the thunders of my indignation, asking them "how, after declining a test which no

honest man could object to, they could expect sympathy or assistance from others?" Their contumacy, I told them, would bring certain ruin on themselves and on their country, for it would alienate all their friends, whom, on our return to Constantinople and to Europe, we should be under the necessity of apprising of it. Sultan Mahmoud himself, their religious chief, would, on hearing of it, abandon them thenceforward to their own devices.

This *tirade*, as the Shapsookians understood little or no Turkish, was translated for their benefit by Hadjioli. His version, however, as was subsequently discovered, was a truly free original one, being to the effect that unless the elders of Shapsook made a fair and impartial distribution of the fines, allotting them their due share of horses, pistols, guns, &c., they would assuredly incur the high displeasure of Sultan Mahmoud and the Queen of England; nay, that each of the seven kings would feel personally aggrieved at conduct so unhandsome and rapacious. On hearing these denunciations, the elders of Shapsook, who, good, easy men, fully believed them to proceed from ourselves, at once consented to a more equal distribution of the exuviae; and nothing thereafter occurred to interrupt the harmony of their proceedings till the

oath had been duly administered to the whole district.

In justice to our friends, whose character these interested squabbles may tend to lower in the opinion of my readers, I should state my belief that the levying of fines formed no part of the inducement for the administration of the oath. Such penalties were prescribed both by custom and analogy, which, however, in every other case had also provided for the disposal of them. We should not be surprised, therefore, if, under these circumstances, a leaven of mercenary feeling betrayed itself, or if those who had been otherwise gratuitously bestowing their time and attention on public affairs should seek to be remunerated from this stock of unappropriated valuables. We were, nevertheless, much disgusted when we discovered the trick that had been played us by Hadjioli. Other circumstances also which occurred after we had been joined by Mr. Bell, and which had tended to aggravate our displeasure against the judge, determined us to remain no longer in the same neighbourhood, but to return once more to Semez.

The reader will not have forgotten the liberal offer which our companion Nadir had made to the Circassians to defray the expenses of an embassy to London. It had, in the first instance,

been received with transports of gratitude. We were a good deal surprised, therefore, as the time approached for Nadir's departure, that there should be some demur on the matter, and we attributed it to the manœuvres of the judge; but, as we afterwards ascertained, we did him wrong in these suspicions. Hadjioli, though a crafty and coarse-minded man, had the interests of his country sincerely at heart. The reason for the hesitation that took place with respect to the ambassadors was, that the whole country was under an engagement to Sefir Bey—the one they had already accredited—to employ no other channel of negotiation without consulting him. Though keenly alive to the advantages that might result from the opening of direct relations with the British government, they conceived they were not at liberty to profit by them till they had communicated on the subject with their ambassador at Adrianople. Their pertinacity on this point was to us, at the time, perfectly inexplicable. Nadir, however, had subsequently every doubt removed, when, on his way to England, he visited Sefir Bey at Adrianople; and that chieftain showed him a letter addressed to him at the epoch referred to, and demanding his sanction to the proposed mission to London. These facts are very remarkable, and of high im-

portance, inasmuch as they demonstrate the caution and scrupulous exactness they are disposed to observe in their diplomatic relations, which in this instance they feared to stultify by the employment of different representatives. Foreign governments will be enabled to judge from them of the degree of credit which such representatives would deserve at their hands, and of the respect which all engagements they might contract with them are likely to be observed by the Circassians.

Having taken a last farewell of Shahin-Gheri on the 6th January, we once more traversed the plains of the Kuban, now presenting to the eye one blank surface of dazzling whiteness; but the woods through which we passed, though travestied in the same manner, yet spangled, feathered, and crystallised all over by the frost, (a silver forest, as it is called,) had a look of fantastic splendour such as I had never before seen, as if winter had been decking them after his own fashion, in emulation of the spring. The cold, however, was intense, nor could our sheep-skin doublets altogether protect us from the piercing sharpness of a wind, which had swept over all the snows of all the Russias between us and the north pole. We made but short stages, therefore, and felt by no means sorry when, in the

midst of the snowy desert, the ascending smoke of a hamlet indicated an oasis of warmth and genial refreshment. Wherever this might be, or whoever its proprietor, we hastened to it in the certainty of an hospitable welcome.

At Bogundour, we had a host with whom we had lodged on our way to Happle, and who appeared delighted to see us on our return. The worthy man had three daughters, tall, fair, and well-grown girls, with blue eyes and braided tresses, who, at his special request, did their best to entertain us. Their behaviour, to prove their obedience no doubt, was most amiable, not to say affectionate, each choosing a partner nothing loath, and sparing neither smiles nor caresses to make him happy. Yet was their demeanour neither bold nor wanton, and I should be sorry if anything I have written led the world to suppose that the morals of the sex in Circassia (though, sapient reader, "by your smiling you would seem to say so") were not "altogether correct." The favours which our less fortunate swains find it so difficult even to steal, and which are commonly disputed with them *pugnis et unguibus*, are here merely a tribute which the warrior feels himself entitled to claim, and which maiden simplicity scarce blushes to concede. I for one am in honour bound to uphold their fair

fame against all misconstruction ; and I am sure my companion Nadir will in the same quarrel say, *Honi soit qui mal y pense*, and do battle for them like any knight of the garter.

Returned on the 19th January in safety to our old quarters at Semez ; and another fortnight having elapsed, unmarked by the occurrence of anything of importance, circumstances which I am about to relate recalled us once more to the Kuban. I should have mentioned, that on recrossing upon our way home the different streams which flow into that river, we found the whole population in a state of great excitement, waiting the accustomed signal of their chiefs for the passage of it. The guides and scouts, who had been to reconnoitre, had brought back the most favourable accounts as to its practicability, which, they all declared, it would be a tempting of Providence to neglect. Having, moreover, penetrated beyond the line of the Russian castles, they had found things in the most inviting position for a foray. The picture they drew of immense flocks and herds, unguarded by any but their shepherds, and flourishing villages undefended by any but substantial boors, with their wives and children, were such as to produce the liveliest impressions on a Circassian imagination. All other business and pursuits were in consequence laid aside, and

even the hunters were neglecting their season, till they knew whether their powder and shot might not be more profitably expended than in shooting at elks, boars, and deer.

We were, therefore, earnestly entreated by all the warriors we met, to use our influence with the chiefs and elders not to defer the collection of a large force for an inroad into Russia. On conferring, however, with them, we found that, in conformity with the policy they had adhered to through the whole of the previous year, they were determined not to be the aggressors, but to confine themselves in future to defensive measures. Their object, they said, was to convince both friends and enemies of their pacific dispositions, and this they had chiefly been induced to do by the official communication made to them last spring by Lord Ponsonby through Sefir Bey. In this document, to which I have before made frequent allusion, they were recommended to propose terms of peace to the Russian general, and to promise to refrain from all future violation of the Russian territory, provided that he, on his part, would withdraw his troops beyond the Kuban. Acting in the spirit of these instructions, and believing themselves, from the tenor of them, to be virtually under the protection of Great Britain, they had since, as an earnest of

their desire to conform to them, almost wholly abstained from active hostilities. In the mean while, the dilemma into which we, as Englishmen and friends of their country, had been thrown by these circumstances, was equally painful and perplexing. Should the communication in question ultimately prove genuine, and to have been authorised by the English government, the course adopted by the Circassians would have been wise and politic. Should it, however, have been spurious, they would of course have been grossly abused, and turned out great sufferers from the forbearance they had shown.

Now, although the information we had received through public channels from England would decidedly have led us to the latter conclusion, yet would it have compromised us far too seriously to have cast discredit on a communication coming under such sanction as the one in question, and thereby for a moment to have attributed such miserable manœuvres to Lord Ponsonby, involving as they did (had they been unauthorised by the British government) not only the utter extinction of what remained of British influence throughout the East, but the positive mischief of having forwarded the progress of Russia, by paralysing for a whole year, under false pretences, the exertions of her most energetic opponents.

For these reasons, whether ill or well founded, the chieftains had decided against any expedition into Russia, much to the mortification of the Deli-Kans, who, with a change of wind and a dissolution of the ice of the Kuban, saw all their prospects of glory and spoil dissolving for a year to come.

About this time, however, some incidents occurred, which were calculated to rouse them from their inaction. Whether it was that the Circassians, meditating themselves no injury to the Russians, and suspecting, therefore, no hostile intentions on their part, had relaxed the vigilance with which they were wont to observe the lines of Anapa, (a circumstance the latter must soon have been aware of from the diminished number of their watch-fires,) or whether from new instructions issued by the merciful cabinet of St. Petersburg, I cannot pretend to say ; but the Russian garrison suddenly made a sally, and attempted during the night to burn and plunder the hamlets in the neighbourhood. Their success, however, was very partial. After capturing a few sheep and old women who were unable to escape, they were compelled to make a precipitate retreat to Anapa. This outrage was followed, a few days afterwards, by one of a more serious nature. At a few miles' distance, a Türk-

ish ship had been hauled on shore, to which the Russians, having attacked it by surprise, and simultaneously by land and sea, succeeded in setting fire. The land-party, however, were most severely handled on their return; and if the powder of the Circassians had not failed them, not a man would have re-entered the gates of Anapa. As it was, they left their wagons and wounded, among whom was their commanding officer, in the hands of the victors.

These successive provocations on the part of the Russians were not without their natural effect on the Circassians, as we ascertained the very next day from a visit of our stately friend Keriak Oglou Ali Bey, who unexpectedly entered our apartment, armed to the teeth, in the full costume of a Circassian warrior. After discussing some indifferent matters, he briefly explained to us the object of his mission. "We had hoped," he said, "that the Russians would have taken a lesson from our moderation; but they have compelled us to imitate their own barbarity. Mansour Bey has summoned us to the Kuban, which, Insh' Allah, if the ice be not gone, we will cross the day after to-morrow. If you wish to witness our proceedings, you can accompany us; our place of meeting is at Westagoi." Agreeably to this invitation we set out, accompanied by

a train of friends and dependents, for the place indicated to us. Our party was joined by a party of horsemen in the valley of Semez ; and the next morning, in proceeding along the broad and populous plain of Anapa, we could see every hamlet pouring forth its tribute of warriors to swell the numbers of our band. Though a southerly wind, which had prevailed for a few days past, and now breathed almost a summer temperature into the atmosphere, already prognosticated we were assembling too late, it had no visible effect on the gathering, in which our interest deepened with the increasing stir and bustle as we drew near its appointed rendezvous.

Our style of advance was altogether different from the listless and rambling character of our former excursions ; pressing steadily forward, like men with some definite and important object in view, halting only to exchange a brief salute with the leaders of the different parties who joined us on our route, and then pursuing it in a body with the same expedition as before. But it was on reaching the heights that command the valley of Westagoi that the scene opened upon us with peculiar animation : with an effect I was in some measure unprepared for, and which I shall not easily forget—streaming down from all the declivities which enclosed that valley like a basin,

troop after troop was seen emerging from the thickets—winding down the steep, and prancing over the plain—some with banners gaily fluttering in the breeze, and some moving in dense column—all directing their course to where, in the hollow of a hill which screened the place of gathering from the plains of the Kuban, was erected the standard of Mansour Bey.

It was evident that his summons, considering it had been only issued two days, had been nobly answered; and it was with a glance of mingled pride and satisfaction that the veteran met our greeting. Not many days before, we had left him bedridden with his wound; but it seemed he had no leisure to languish any longer, and, in the excitement of the bustle we found him in, he appeared to have forgotten it altogether. In the leaders, who, as their different bands drew up and took their station in the valley, now gathered round him from every side for instructions, we recognised the friends whose hospitality we had experienced in various parts of Natu-koitch. There, on his powerful black charger, was the broad-breasted champion, Arslan Gheri; there Kaplan, the tiger of the Kuban; there the fiery Djanboulat, and the lively veteran Shupash; there also, vapouring and scampering about like a frolicsome ape on horseback, was the Quixotic

figure of the gallant Atukoi—strange as it may appear, the animal was not deficient in bravery; but bravest of them all, and now completely in his glory, was our old favourite, the Wolf. Ever and anon he would appear suddenly before us, grinning, curveting, and quite beside himself with delight, and then gallop off at a tangent to the main body again.

There was evidently something in the wind; and we learnt, on inquiring, he was preparing another surprise for us—a different one, however, from that with which he had treated us on our visit to Todjagouz. Apprehensive that the expedition, under the prudent auspices of Mansour, would not afford scope for any extraordinary display of valour, such as he now hoped to astonish us by, he was himself getting up something by way of episode to it, of a nature so hair-brained and desperate, as should exceed our most sanguine expectations. He had, for this purpose, we were told, been making up a party of young fellows as daring as himself, who promised to stand by him in all his undertakings. But that they might not forget their promise, which men under such circumstances are apt to do, he had taken the precaution to borrow and bring with him a pocket edition of the Koran. Upon this he was now occupied in privately administering an oath to each of his companions.

The confusion, in the mean while, was not so great, nor Mansour's duties as a general (the limits of which, like those of his authority, were rather uncertain) so arduous, as, considering the total absence of discipline and subordination in the Circassian host, might have been expected. The courtesy of the chiefs, and the habitual sedateness of the men, preserved an order which, in such a moment of excitement, was quite extraordinary. After the circle had been joined by the principal chiefs, Mansour, according to the good old Roman fashion, proceeded to address them in a military harangue. Without pretending to follow him word for word in it, it was easy to understand its tenor. The contracted brow and tones, at once plaintive and indignant, of the speaker, told not less plainly of wrongs and cruelties, (a long and dismal catalogue,) of burnings, bloodshed, and devastations, inflicted and sustained, than the fiery vehemence by which it was succeeded ; the kindling eye, clenched hand, and dilated chest—of vengeance—prompt and unsparing vengeance—to be wreaked for them.

In the passionate exhortation that ensued, we could hear the names of tribes and individuals now familiar to us ; and it was clear that personal and sectional, as well as national feelings, were strongly appealed to, and that allusion was also

made more than once to ourselves. The dense ring which, during the address, his hearers had formed around us, and the outer circles of which were composed of horsemen, presented a dark throng of bearded and bonneted faces, all riveted on the orator with the most earnest expression of attention. But, however roused or agitated by what they heard, they preserved their accustomed decorum, nor otherwise gave vent to their emotion than now and then by a deeply-muttered "*Amin.*" Among other things, as we were afterwards informed, he told them that he had been visited by a venerable anchorite, who had left his seclusion in the Caucasus, where he had devoted himself to the duties of religion and the study of astrology, to announce to him the certainty of success, provided that his followers, neglecting the usual objects of plunder, should confine themselves to the capture of Russian cannon and ammunition—things, by-the-bye, which there needed no holy hermit to convince Mansour would be very useful to them. He concluded by telling them that they would, no doubt, seek to signalize their valour before their English guests. He knew, however, that these would be better pleased by their obedience to the orders of their chiefs than by any exhibition of rashness. This was, doubtless, intended as a hint for Tougouse, on whom

nevertheless, though looking demure enough just then, it seems to have had little effect. Then, taking by the hand Keri Oglou Shamiz Bey, he presented him to the host as a leader whose long experience, tried valour, and discretion, entitled him to their confidence in the approaching enterprise.

This compliment to the gray hairs of his brother chieftain was politic as it was amiable. The Circassians soon tire of authority in the hands of the same individual; and Mansour, it seems, was glad to shift the invidious burthen to the shoulders of Shamiz, who, on his part, though secretly gratified by it, yet affected, as he shrank with downcast eyes within the folds of his mantle, to be completely overwhelmed by so great an honour.

It was then settled that the infantry, which amounted to a third of the whole force, and which was destined to cover the retreat of the cavalry on their return to the Kuban, should set forth thither immediately, while the latter, to allow as much time as possible for reinforcements to come up, should bivouac the greater part of the night on the neighbouring heath, but be in readiness to cross the river (which was about 15 miles distant) at daybreak. All these arrangements concluded, Nadir and I took leave of Mr. Bell,

who declined, on private grounds, to accompany us any further. Though highly approving of this expedition on principle, he had unsettled claims on the Russian government which violating its territory might compromise. He, therefore, parted from us, and repaired, in company with a Circassian surgeon, (one of the most skilful in the country,) to a house not far from the Kuban, there to await the result, and be at hand in case his assistance might be required for the wounded, of whom, from the warlike nature of the inroad, it was to be feared the number would be considerable. As for Nadir and myself, our quarters that night, with no other beds than our cloaks, were the part of the moor occupied by the cavaliers of Semez, whom we found, on joining them, already lighting their fires there.

Fresh horsemen continued to come in till nightfall, and even afterwards; it was evident, from the increasing number of watch-fires kindling in every direction, that we were being strongly reinforced. At its greatest force the cavalry assembled there must have amounted to 5,000; could they have been joined by the horsemen from the coast, their number would have been trebled. With the exception, moreover, of about fifty who had come with Djanbolat from the Aboon, it consisted exclusively of the men of

Natu-koitch. Those of Shapsook, it seems, had determined on a separate expedition, and a report which spread a general exultation among our army, reached us while encamped :—that, led on by the old lion Hadji Guz-Beg, they had already entered the Russian territory, and carried off a rich booty from the towns and villages on their own frontier. On visiting our friends at their respective quarters, we found them in high spirits, listening to the songs of minstrels, and talking over their old exploits. Wearied at length, we rode back to our watch-fires, and endeavoured to snatch a few moments of repose, which, however, for my part, was no easy matter. This the reader, I trust, will do me the justice to believe, was less owing to apprehensions for my personal safety, than conscientious scruples as to how far I was justified as an Englishman to take a part in the wild sort of warfare I was now enlisted in. But my mind was gradually set at ease on this score.

In the first place, I felt that if war was ever sanctified by a good cause, there could not be a better or a nobler one than that of the Circassians; and then, as regarded myself, if, in an expedition of this nature, I was destined to be a spectator of horrors that were in some measure inseparable from it, I knew that our presence, if pro-

ductive of any effect at all, must have that of mitigating them. I knew the Circassians, moreover, too well, to apprehend any revolting excesses on their part. I knew they never slaughtered their enemies in cold blood, and that violence to women was a practice the most abhorrent to their usages. Composed by these reflections, I was just falling asleep, when the confused sound of voices, and the general commotion about us, indicated the time was come to break up from our bivouac. It was two hours after midnight when the Circassians began their march, which, with the darkness of the night, and the difficulties of the ground they had to traverse, (consisting of bog, brier, and ravine, and, in short, every variety of ground except *terra firma*,) was, to my thinking, neither safe nor pleasant. Having been exhorted, before we set out, to stick to my own party and banner, I did my best not to lose sight of them: however, as they of Semez differed in appearance, particularly in the dark, from no other Circassians, and as our banner, "mocking the air with idle state," was neither more nor less than a pocket-handkerchief of no very ample dimensions, it was no wonder that I was soon separated from them and my countryman. On inquiry at different times, as we went on, floundering and scrambling

through the broken ground I have described, I found myself marching, one after another, with the men of nearly all the districts of Natu-koitch. Many of them were total strangers to me, and some of them I knew must be from the wilder parts of the province. To a superstitious imagination, the strange figures I was riding with, to say nothing of the dark masses sweeping on every side of us, would have been calculated, perhaps, to excite serious misgivings. Each of these was muffled in a thick capote, from the top of which protruded the muzzle of his rifle, and from the bottom (for it completely covered the horse's crupper) dangled the tail, which all of them, as they trooped on before me, switched to and fro like hobgoblins. A pretty dance, too, they led me that night, sometimes fighting our way through almost impenetrable thickets, where leafless branches banged and scratched me most unmercifully, and sometimes immersed to the breech as we toiled through a half-frozen bog.

We came at length to a halt in the midst of what appeared to be a considerable hamlet. There, yielding once more to my drowsiness, I began to dose on my saddle, and my horse, who was supperless, to help himself to the thatch of a cottage by which he was standing. My recollections of what afterwards happened to me are

none of the most distinct. All I can remember is being roused by a woman who issued from her cabin to protest against the further demolition of the roof—then perceiving with alarm that I had been left behind by my companions—then bolting, without staying further question, by the road I supposed they must have taken—then resigning myself to the discretion of my horse, who struck across a country as wild, apparently, as that by which we had hitherto marched—being next guided by some watch-fires glimmering in a wood—finding myself by their light among a troop of warriors, crowded, men and horses, in the houses and courts of an extensive homestead, without being at first able to make anything of all this, except that the men were Circassians, and the place somewhere near the Kuban—meeting at length with Nadir's black domestic, who had been also in the darkness separated from his master—being taken by him to some chiefs with whom I was acquainted, and finally conducted by them, as day began to break and the army once more to muster, to the quarters of Mansour and Shamiz. With the shades of night was likewise dissipated the nocturnal confusion of my ideas.

It was a glorious spectacle which met the eye as the rising sun discovered our gallant little

army once more assembling on an eminence which immediately overlooks the Kuban—discovered also, what then seemed the doomed and devoted country at their feet. But Providence had ordained it otherwise. The storm which threatened it was dispersed, and the proud hopes of the Circassians as suddenly overcast by the intelligence now brought in by the guides who had been sent forward by Mansour to choose the best place for the passage, and who declared that, in consequence of the thaw, it could not possibly take place. This information had the effect of immediately disbanding the infantry, and about a third of the cavalry; but the remainder could not be so easily prevailed upon to relinquish an enterprise from which they had promised themselves such glorious results.

Their leader having informed them that he had sent on a party to see if bridges could not be constructed over the broken ice, the main body, now consisting of about three thousand horse, advanced to ascertain this point themselves. After skirting for some time the reeds which I have elsewhere described as forming the peculiar feature of this river, to both sides of which they serve as a fringe about a mile and a half in depth, they came to a narrow aperture in them, admitting about three horsemen abreast, through which

they immediately dashed, the horses wading almost up to the girths in mud and water.

I was among the first to reach the place on the banks where some hasty attempts were being made to construct bridges with interwoven branches over the chasms occasioned by the thaw on either side of the river. Foremost and most indefatigable in this fatigue party was Tougouse; the bare idea of abandoning the enterprise seemed almost to drive him crazy. Whom also should I find there watching with impatience the progress of the work, but my companion Nadir, on whose account, not knowing what had become of him, I had begun to feel very anxious. The arrival of Mansour and the other chiefs, who at length came up with the main body, and forthwith summoned a council of war on the banks, effected no change or delay in the measures of Tougouse and his comrades, who, to the number of about three hundred, having completed their arrangements, led their horses one by one over the frail bridges and rotten ice into the Russian territory. Among the first to push forward, not doubting we should be followed by the whole army, were Nadir and myself; but the army, we soon discovered, had no such intentions, but, after the passage of our detachment, remained stationary on the left bank, waiting apparently to see what we should do next.

We then learnt (when it was too late to retreat with honour, had we been disposed to do so) that Mansour, Shamiz, and the rest of the chiefs, had declared it would be madness to persist in the expedition, since, if they succeeded in effecting the passage without any serious accident, it was certain that when they should have to return, laden with booty, and fighting their way through the Russian ranks, it would be utterly impossible to recross the stream. The chiefs, too, had observed that the forts on the opposite heights, built within cannon-shot of each other, preserved an ominous silence, it being their wont on these occasions to keep up a constant discharge of artillery for the purpose of intimidation. They argued from this, that, apprized by their spies of the intended passage, large reinforcements of troops had arrived during the night, and would be posted beyond the reeds, for the purpose of attacking them when they should be entangled among them and the marshes. Upon these grounds, which appeared altogether unanswerable, the expedition was abandoned. But that which had been pronounced impracticable for the whole army, was now, it seems, about to be attempted by a chivalrous handful of it, our "most forlorn of hopes," led on by the magnanimous Tougouse. A stranger to apprehension

of any sort, his only anxiety at this critical moment was to eke out the scanty numbers of his band by as many supplemental warriors as he could possibly induce to follow him from the opposite side. For this purpose he might be seen passing and repassing with great diligence, leading in triumph those whom his eloquence had enlisted, and, having seen them safe to our side of the river, hastening back in quest of more.

In this way the greater and lesser division of the Circassian force stood gazing at each other for upwards of an hour on each side of the Kuban—the one, it seems, unwilling to retreat, and the other to advance without their countrymen. The minds of our party were at length made up; and great was the sensation on the opposite bank, (so great, indeed, that but for the chiefs who guarded the bridge, there would have been an instantaneous rush towards us,) when, preparatory to their departure, each of our cavaliers dismounted, and after a brief prayer, offered with raised hands in silence, sprang to his saddle again, and then drew up with the rest in a body. At that moment, just as we were about to start, we were stopped by two chieftains, by name Khattow and Djanboulat, who had been deputed to Nadir and myself, by the council, to conjure us, once for all, to return,

as those we were accompanying would assuredly be cut off to a man. Nadir answered for us both, that be that as it might, we would stand or fall with them. Finding, therefore, we would not go back with them, the two chiefs thought they could not do better than go on with us.

Our troop now moved rapidly forward by a pathway that ran in an oblique direction from the bank through the forest of reeds, which, rising above our heads, obstructed the view on every side of us. The deep tranquillity that reigned there (the only sounds we could detect being the sighing and rustling of these reeds as they tossed to and fro in the wind) had, in the mean while, anything but a tranquillising effect upon us, as it gave every reason to suspect an ambuscade, for which the nature of the ground was peculiarly favourable. But our guides were on the alert, and continued to lead the way with no less caution than celerity. The whole band, in short, seemed now impressed with the necessity of steady and simultaneous action; and I was surprised to see in what excellent order they advanced, and how, when their leaders halted or went on, which they would do every now and then, as they encountered anything to excite their suspicion, the compact and rolling mass was brought suddenly to a stand, or rushed forward.

again, in obedience, as it were, to a single impulse.

We came at length, after proceeding in this way for more than two miles, to an abrupt turn in the lane, where it struck off almost at a right angle to the plain, and where we became all at once aware of the nature and extent of the preparations which the Russians had made for our reception. This passage we found was effectually barricadoed, and completely enfiladed by a strong battery, guarded by infantry and Cossacks at the further end. To storm this battery by the long and narrow causeway in front was rushing on certain destruction. Our party, therefore, came to a full stop, and the chiefs, without dismounting, drew together to consult as to the course they should take. Opinions were far from unanimous—some maintaining there was no alternative but retreat—and others, with Tougouse at their head, wondering what the deuce they were stopping for.

“Have not you,” said he, “come in search of the enemy, whom you have sworn to fight, when and wherever you should meet with him? Is he not before you now? What more would you wish for?” “*Bismillah!* your oath! your oath! your oath!” was responded by a hundred voices; and further deliberation was cut short by Pakako,

the bairactar, or standard-bearer of Adheucum.

A gallant fellow was Pakako! though by no means an Adonis—and his native ugliness he had, on the present occasion, sought to improve still further, by turning inside out his long goat-skin kalpak, which, added to the excitement of the moment, made his looks almost preternaturally ferocious. Waving his standard high over his head, he broke with a scornful yell from the council, and, followed helter-skelter by the Deli-Kans, dashed up the avenue. Close at his heels was my brave companion Nadir; and not far behind, being curious to see how the mad career would terminate, was the writer of this narrative. But ere they had proceeded half way, the state of the road, which was heavy and deep in mud, made it difficult for their horses to advance, and gave leisure to Djanboulat to overtake them. He was an umpire, whose known bravery raised him above all suspicion. Never, perhaps, had he counselled retreat before, and his bold countenance was suffused with a deep blush, as he told them, if they could not make their way through the reeds, they must return. “We will try, however,” he added; and accompanied by Khattow, he plunged among the reeds, where he sank almost immediately to the stirrups in the bog.

Every attempt, after the failure of this experiment, to advance any farther, was relinquished. Our party was compelled reluctantly to retreat and disperse with the main body on the opposite bank.

CHAPTER XVI.

Nadir Bey leaves Circassia—Mr. Bell proceeds to the south—
Capture of a Russian fort by the Circassians—Preparations for
my own departure from the country—Homeward bound—Re-
turn to Constantinople.

FROM the 8th of February, the period of our return to Semez, till the 24th of June, when I took my departure from Circassia, there occurred few events deserving of circumstantial detail. Many of those, indeed, I have already recorded, may appear useless, perhaps, as illustrative of the character and customs of the Circassians, tedious as they are trivial. I shall hasten, therefore, to a conclusion.

On the 20th of February, our countryman Nadir Bey parted from us, setting out, accompanied by Shamiz, to Djanhoté, a point of the coast between Pchat and Ghelenjik, where there

was then lying *perdu* a small Turkish vessel about to sail for the coast of Asia Minor.

The impression he had left behind him in Natu-koitch is highly honourable to himself and his country. His gallantry and proficiency in the exercises, martial and equestrian, that are so much esteemed among them, greatly endeared him to the young folks of both sexes there. Not having had the pleasure of meeting him since we parted at Semez, I am not aware what impression he may retain with respect to the Circassians; yet I cannot but believe that his thoughts, amidst the gaiety and splendour of European civilisation, must sometimes revert to the romantic scenes and primitive manners of those among whom he sojourned in the shadows of the mighty Caucasus, and that the record of our wanderings there will, to him at least, not be altogether devoid of interest. He set sail from Djanhoté on the 8th of March, and we received shortly afterwards a letter from him, dated Trebisonde, where he had arrived after a safe voyage of three days. The Russian consul at that port had, in pursuance of instructions from his government, insisted that the Pacha should severely punish the captain of the vessel that had brought him over. Ship and cargo were accordingly confiscated, and the poor man was thrown into prison. Nadir had

afterwards to indemnify him at his own expense. He informed us also in his letter that the Emperor Nicholas had had the audacity to give orders that if any of us were taken we should be hanged. The little respect he had shown for the property of Englishmen rendered it probable that their lives would be held as cheap by him ; still we flattered ourselves that the people of England, who through inadvertence had allowed our ministers to sacrifice the former, would have called him to a strict account for the latter.

In the mean while, we knew from experience that there was perhaps no place in the world where we were safer from his vengeance, where his threats were likely to prove more impotent, and the machinations of his emissaries more abortive, than in Circassia.

On the 24th of the same month, Mr. Bell proceeded to the south, to take possession of some merchandise which had been brought from Turkey for us by Nadir's dragoman. He purposed returning to Semez in the course of a month, but in consequence of a misunderstanding with Shamiz, who accompanied him, he was prevented from doing as he had intended, and we were not destined to meet again in Circassia.

The details of this unpleasant affair will probably be given in the narrative of Mr. Bell—here

a few words of explanation will suffice. Shamiz, it appears, had sought to assume a degree of control over the movements of Mr. Bell, which the latter refused to submit to. Irritated at this resistance, he had then, in order to get him completely in his power, and compel him to return with him to Natu-koitch, denounced him to the chiefs of Abbassa as a Russian emissary. Such charges, among the Circassians themselves, are oftener made than proved, and therefore, till proved, very lightly treated. In this instance Shamiz, notwithstanding his great influence and habitual presence of mind, was, when confronted with him he had slandered, completely baffled by the coolness and spirit with which his accusations were met. He found, in short, he had only covered himself with disgrace; and made the best of his way home alone.

This was not the only occasion in which the *suaviter in modo et fortiter in re* that distinguished his demeanour, established Mr. Bell's superiority with the Circassians, to whose praise it must be said, that they could discriminate and set a due value upon the solid and sterling parts of character, and that the dignity, gentleness, and longanimity evinced in his intercourse with them eventually triumphed over all hostility, and finally brought even the haughty Shamiz to a

contrite acknowledgment of the wrong he had done him.

On his return to Semez, on the 16th of April, Shamiz, ashamed probably of his conduct in this affair, endeavoured to conceal it from me, stating that Mr. Bell had been detained by business, and would rejoin us in the course of a few weeks. As he had brought no letters, however, I had serious misgivings as to the truth of this statement. It was not till three weeks afterwards that I was relieved from my suspense by a special messenger who arrived with letters from my friend, detailing all that had happened.

I was then labouring under a severe indisposition from an ague, the malignity of which had in the course of a month left me totally destitute of strength and spirits. I had at first struggled against it as well as I could, submitting myself to the treatment (in default of better) of Circassian leeches and nurses, whose prescriptions were manifold as they were fruitless. At the strong recommendation of my hostess, I had allowed myself to be covered till I was almost suffocated, together with a chafing-pan full of thyme, under a blanket, but the only effect of the perspiration that ensued was additional fever and debility. The next who undertook to cure me was Shamiz.

The remedy he boasted was, though composed of simples, anything but a simple one. A hundred different herbs, and neither more nor less, for two of them alike would have spoiled the charm, were to be carefully culled and burnt under my nostrils in a platter. But though my host was at the trouble of spending a whole day in the collection and assortment of these grasses, the holocaust, I am sorry to say, was wholly ineffectual. It had this advantage, however, over the nostrum of my hostess, that, if attended with no good, it did no harm either. The last to take the field against my fever was a neighbour reputed to possess great skill and wisdom, who staked his head against a piece of merchandise that he would expel it by a process full as innocent as that of Shamiz.

Having ascertained the precise period of the fit, he ascended the highest hill in the neighbourhood, and at that critical moment plucked a certain flower that grew on the top of it. He was astonished, on his return, to find that his charm had not taken effect. This very probably arose from my want of faith in his promises; at any rate, I claimed neither his forfeited head, nor he my *aladgas*. Another remedy which was recommended to me was to pass the night in the copse hard by, under two large trees, which by their

hidden virtue, I was told, would certainly put a stop to the fever ; but though convinced it would do so not only with respect to that, but also every other ill that flesh is heir to, I positively refused to try it.

The medical resources of my friends being fairly exhausted, and my fever abated, I had no alternative but to despatch a messenger four hundred miles for quinine from the medicine chest of Mr. Bell. A single dose of this sovereign febrifuge restored me to health, if not to strength, immediately.

This was in the month of June ; but while I was still stretched on my back by the fever, the warriors of Semez, summoned to the field by those of the plain of Anapa, had lent their assistance to a very gallant achievement in that quarter ;—having taken by assault the round detached fort which had been built for the protection of the military colony. The Russian garrison having made a sortie in quest of plunder, the Circassians, under the command of old Shupash, not satisfied with repulsing them, divided their force and assumed the offensive ; boldly advancing, in defiance of its guns, to the walls of the fort, they scaled it, and either killed or made prisoners the whole of its defenders. They themselves lost twelve men, five of whom were inhabitants of our

valley. The wild lamentations of the women, answering to the Gaelic coronach over the slain, came sadly to my ear at night as the artillery had thundered in it during the day. After the celebration of the Russian Easter, the war which, except in this corner of the country, had been entirely suspended for seven months, broke out afresh. No longer in fear of the equinoctial gales, the cruisers of the enemy once more guarded the coast, and towards the end of May the inhabitants of Semez were suddenly thrown into great alarm by the appearance of a fleet, consisting, with transports, of twenty-seven sail. For three days that it anchored outside the bay, the valley was a scene of the utmost confusion, those nearest the coast being engaged in carrying off their effects to places of security in the hills, while the people of the neighbouring district were summoned to their assistance, and councils and gatherings took place in every direction. Unable, in the mean while, to quit my couch, I was a prey to the most gloomy forebodings; for not only was I distressed by the public danger, but haunted by the uncomfortable belief that I was myself an object of suspicion to some of the Semezians. These, I have every reason to think, were but few in number, but in the hypochondriac state to which I was reduced by disease, I was much agitated

by something I had overheard in a conversation carried on in the courtyard of the guest-house ; and from which the people of Semez, I began to fear, might have taken it into their heads that they had been betrayed by us, and that the armament which threatened a descent upon their valley had been fitted out in consequence of the information we had furnished to the Russians in the letters we had at different times despatched since our arrival there. Such things I knew had been before insinuated, and they were likely, in the perturbation of men's minds, to find readier credence than ever. Among other remarks which the few words of Circassian I understood, enabled me, as I fancied, to catch, it was said, I imagined, that Mr. Bell had very opportunely absconded, but that I was counterfeiting sickness in order to impose upon them as to the share I had had in bringing the Russians upon them. My imperfect knowledge of the language, I repeat, may have misled me. At any rate, I soon discovered the feelings of the people at large towards me were anything but hostile. On the morning of the fourth day, the fleet, to their great satisfaction, having sailed during the night, was no longer visible. The expedition was intended for the south, and Semez was unmolested till the following year.

A few days afterwards, being recovered from the fever, I announced to Shamiz my resolution of leaving Circassia. It had been adopted on mature deliberation. Upon personal and public grounds, I conceived it to be my duty to retire from a country where I apprehended my presence could only encourage hopes which I had now no expectation of seeing realized. My own, as the reader is aware, had been sanguine enough in coming to it; nor could the Circassians themselves feel more cruel disappointment at the pusillanimous conduct of our government than I did: still I had no formal ground of complaint against them. Encouragement I had undoubtedly received from an individual in office, though, from the circumspection he had used, it could scarcely be called official. I knew the government, under different circumstances, would have gladly profited by my past exertions; as things had turned out, however, I saw I was not to expect the least countenance, and that my labours had, in this point of view, been all thrown away. This was the more certain, as Lord Palmerston, in his precipitation to back out of the affair, had unblushingly disavowed the proceedings, and basely sacrificed the interests of his official subordinates; and this too, though clearly implicated in them by the correspondence of his own secre-

tary. Should the reader have seen the extracts that have been published from these letters, he will doubtless recollect the passage in which the under secretary, recommending that competent persons should be sent to Circassia, with the view of awaking interest in the public mind by descriptions, illustrations, &c., says it will be necessary "*faire flèche de tout bois*."

It was some time after my return to Constantinople that I first saw this curious fragment, and must confess I was a good deal struck with it; a new light broke upon me, nor could I for a moment resist the flattering conviction that I had myself been one of the favoured instruments—one of the random shafts shot from CUPID'S quiver into the Caucasus. There, for anything he knew or cared to the contrary, I might have remained till doomsday, but there, were it only to turn his own weapons against him, I was determined to stop no longer. Yet, could my stay have been of any benefit to the Circassians, no personal consideration could have induced me to leave them; but I was sincerely convinced, for the reasons I have already stated, it would have been rather prejudicial than otherwise to them. From themselves, I immediately perceived, on conferring with the chiefs, that however reluctant

to part with me, I had no sort of hindrance to apprehend.

They acknowledged that our conduct had been open and honourable towards them, and if they had been at any time deluded with respect to the objects of our visit, they had to thank others for it, since we had invariably represented ourselves to be not officially connected with our government. Such being the case, we could not of course be answerable for its acts, and had doubtless been as much deceived as to its intentions as themselves. Indeed, the communications made to them by Lord Ponsonby, through Sefir Bey, afforded them such positive grounds for expecting the intervention of England, that they were far from despairing of it even then. They implored me, therefore, to tarry with them some time longer, as the spirits of the people were greatly supported in the conflict by my presence. The most earnest in his entreaties was Shamiz, who declared, that whatever doubts he might formerly have had with respect to us, from the deficiency of our credentials, he was convinced of the deep obligation they were all of them under to us. He then told me confidentially that his eyes had been chiefly opened on this point by the Russians themselves, who,

through a secret emissary, had offered him a large bribe,—that is, to replenish his *kalpac* twice with gold, if he would either betray me into their hands, or make away with me privately.

Many were the persuasions and promises by which he and others strove to detain me; but though much affected by them, and though my heart bled within me at the prospect of the calamities that so nearly threatened them, my mind, I told them, was made up; and since my single arm could avail them nothing in their struggle, I was determined to be no longer instrumental in deceiving them as to expectations which I considered to be wholly fallacious. Mr. Bell, who had received assurances that something would be done for them by his friends in England, was justified in remaining; my duty, on the other hand, as distinctly commanded me to leave them.

My departure, therefore, being finally determined upon, I had next to consider the means, which were not so easy as may perhaps be imagined. Every ship that had been stationed on our part of the coast had taken flight on the renewal of the blockade. There was one or two, I was told, in the south; but I very much doubted if the jealousy of the people among whom I then was would permit me to proceed

there. While thus at a loss how to execute my purpose, a Turkish vessel, by the most providential chance in the world, was driven by the enemy's cruisers to a part of the coast the very nearest outside the bay of Semez to my own habitation—that is, on the further side of the exterior range of hills that separated it from the sea. This ship had originally sailed from Taopsa, but, being chased by a Russian corvette, had put back to the coast and taken refuge at Djanhoté; from thence she had made another unsuccessful attempt to get away, and was this time, after passing through the Russian fleet in a fog, compelled to run ashore almost under the walls of Anapa. From this dangerous berth she was soon dislodged by a Russian frigate sent to burn or capture her. Favoured by a calm, she contrived, with the assistance of her oars, to distance her pursuers, who then endeavoured to overtake her with their boats. She had succeeded, however, in weathering a point considerably ahead of them; and, by the time they had turned, it was no longer to be seen, having, in the interim, been hastily dragged on shore, and so completely disguised by the number of boughs attached to her masts and rigging, as to present only the appearance of a tree. In this trim she was now waiting for a good north-wester, to

enable her to slip through the blockading squadron during the night. I was not long in discovering the means of effecting my own escape which Providence had thus sent, as it were, to my very door. One of the Raïses (for, in defiance of the Turkish proverb, which says, too many captains will sink a vessel—there were three of them) waited upon me at my house, and after we had arranged for my passage, I crossed the hills myself, and concluded the bargain with his partners.

All that we now waited for was a fair wind, and I employed the interval in taking leave of my friends. The report having got abroad that I was about to depart, a deputation from the plains of the Kuban, headed by Kaplan and Khattow, came to invite me to a national council at Adheucum, where they said I would have an opportunity of conferring, for the last time, with the memleket, and might formally bid them farewell. Apprehensive, however, that should I withdraw too far from the coast, the vessel, if favoured by a wind, might sail without me, I declined attending it in person, but delegated Shamiz to convey my parting salutations and acknowledgments to the chiefs and elders. Such of them as dwelt within a day's ride of the coast, I visited. Then it was, while attended by

Osman, the faithful companion of all my rambles, I wandered for the last time among the fields, woods, and mountains of the fair province of Natu-koitch, that I felt by how many ties, the growth of a single twelvemonth, I was attached to it. Once more I ascended the highest peak that overlooks the plain of the Kuban—once more I sat at each hospitable hearth, and pledged the good man there in a farewell cup—once more joined the simple revelry of the people at a solemn festival held on the downs between Semez and the plains of Anapa—for the last time assisted at the feast, the dance, and the funeral games; and then, with unaffected regret on both sides, bade adieu to the menleket assembled there.

The last to interpret for me to his countrymen, as he had been the first, was Hadjioli the judge. In answer to my address, he said, "So then you are leaving us, Bey, for ever. You have been so long amongst us, that we had begun to consider you as one of ourselves; but, happily for you, you have a country to go to, where you may live in peace, and where there is yet no dread of the Muscovite. We, alas! have no other home to fly to; nor if we had, would we leave that of our forefathers, in which we were born, which Allah has given us, and which it is our duty to die for."

A few days afterwards, the wind having come round to the north, I hastened over the hills to the sea-side, and found the crew of our vessel preparing to avail themselves of it that evening.

In the course of the day, messengers were sent to the highest points of the hills to ascertain whether any of the enemy's cruisers were in sight. Two of them had been seen in the morning, but towards evening the coast was clear. An hour before sunset, our vessel, divested of its leafy covering, and, having been dragged with the aid of rollers and pulleys to the beach, was once more afloat. A great multitude had assembled to see us go, and as soon as I had embarked, the ship, amidst loud and prolonged cries, Circassian and Turkish, *Ogmaf, Ogmaf, Allaha Ismarladuk!* farewell, farewell, God protect you, we recommend you to God!—got under weigh. She did not, however, at first stand out directly to sea, but ran a westerly course, till it was dark, towards the Crimea. There was a reason for this. The greater part of the Russian fleet was then in the bay of Ghelenjik, and many an anxious look was cast where, stretching far to the east, the promontory of Djanhoté lay black in the shades of evening, like a broad screen between us and the Russians, who, had they observed, would infallibly have sent their steamer after us. But whatever un-

easiness such a neighbourhood might have caused us under other circumstances, my thoughts at that moment were otherwise engrossed, and all my attention directed to the part of the coast we had left, on which the sun, now setting majestically over the hills of Anapa, still shed his parting beams, and which was everywhere crowded with our friends and well-wishers, many of whom, though their pious ejaculations were no longer audible, I could see, by their uplifted hands, were still offering up prayers for our safety. Nor were my own at that instant poured forth less fervently for theirs, or unmingled (as I called to mind all the kindness I had experienced, their worth, their bravery, and hospitality,) with involuntary imprecations on their heartless oppressors. I could see, methought, at the same time, in these very virtues, (for I do not disbelieve in a Providence,) a certain pledge that the degrading yoke which they had hitherto so nobly repelled could never be ultimately imposed upon them ; that Divine Justice might employ the power of Russia as a rod to chasten them, but would not permit it to make slaves of those who, with all their faults, still deserved to be independent.

Tyranny can never long prevail, or freedom be for ever suppressed in the Caucasus ; the tide of conquest may for a while submerge its valleys,

but the time will come when, in spite of all the forts that Russia can erect there, it must recede even from them. The ruins of these, like other remains which serve but as flood-marks to attest how far it has advanced under former invaders, and prove that in some instances it was carried even much further than at present, will by the future generations of Circassia be viewed with the same indifference, and ascribed, in the common oblivion that attends them, to the distant period of Genoese supremacy. Such were the reflections inspired by the last view of Circassia, from whose coasts, till darkness had veiled it from them, I was unable to withdraw my eyes.

The wind blew freshly from the north-west during the whole night, so that I fully expected we should be out of all danger of pursuit the next morning; what, then, was my mortification on waking, to hear the boy announce from the mast that there was a vessel in sight. Half angry with the lad for what I still hoped to find a mistake, I hastened up the rigging, and discovered we were followed by two ships instead of one. We had nothing for it, therefore, but to crowd every sail and run. We thus contrived to lose sight of one of our pursuers in the course of an hour, while the other, on the contrary, though we had set every stitch of canvass we

could find in the ship, seemed still to be gaining on us. As a last resource, we threw out our sweeps, and changed our course a few points to windward.

On perceiving this, the Russian hoisted out his boats, but from the roughness of the sea their attempts to overtake us proved unsuccessful, and after a chase of eight hours we found ourselves clear of our troublesome escort. Still our crew continued to ply their oars till evening, and the wind having freshened during the night, the mountains of Circassia were, the day after, no longer visible. The weather, it was true, was hazy, and towards noon the wind had so completely fallen that we could make but little way.

What added to our anxiety was, a discovery I made about this time, that our compass was good for nothing, and subject to variations that would have puzzled the ablest mariner in our navy; so that our position here in the midst of the Euxine was not the most agreeable in the world. There was a time, and some of my shipmates could remember it, when we could have put into no part of the shores that encompassed us on every side like those of a lake, which we should not have found friendly to us; but now, so rapidly had the power of Russia extended itself along them, that we everywhere feared to meet an

enemy, or, on the mist clearing away from the sea, to discover ourselves close to some hostile portion of the coast. Our position, therefore, I repeat, was embarrassing, nor could the united resources of our three captains do much to extricate us. Their authority over the crew, consisting of five men and a boy, was but slight, and when we had got out of immediate danger, no inducement could prevail on the latter to work at the sweeps. They stretched themselves lazily about the deck, sleeping, smoking, or listening to some religious yarn which one of their number who was an Imaum and a good story-teller, retailed by the hour together. He was a quiet, inoffensive man, with a thin ascetic look, which however, when engaged in his narratives, grew very animated. To some of these, though from their discursive nature it was difficult to preserve the thread of them, I listened with interest.

The hero of one of them was a certain Cadi Oglou Islam, whose miracles of wisdom, prowess, and locomotion—galloping from country to country, and everywhere circumventing and putting to flight large armies of infidels—greatly diverted his auditors, who, nevertheless, I observed, would ever and anon, in the midst of their glee, lift up the mainsail and take a furtive glance around the horizon, to see if we were not

followed by some of the cruisers of the Giaour. We had, unhappily, no Cadi Oglou Islam to protect us now. Islamism, it was clear, had long since declined from the palmy state that produced such champions.

We made but little progress that day, nor was there any change in the weather on the following one, during which we lay, in like manner, almost completely becalmed. To add to our discomfort, our stock of water was exhausted, the remaining cask having turned putrid; while the sailors, instead of betaking themselves to their oars, began to amuse each other with dismal stories of what had been suffered by the crews of other vessels under similar privations. Towards evening, however, they got a fright which made them bestir themselves. A vessel was descried at no great distance, and though it was probably only some merchantman bound to the Crimea, they hastened out of her way as quick as their oars could carry them, and continued rowing even after it was dark. About two hours before daybreak, I was roused by my attendant Hassein, and found all hands in the greatest alarm and confusion, some of them asserting that there was a ship advancing on them. Nor were we long in doubt on the subject. The object which had alarmed them, looming indistinctly to larboard, now came right

athwart our course, at scarcely a cable's length ahead of us. It was a large two-masted vessel, and we were most fortunate in not coming foul of her. Our men were much terrified, and redoubled their efforts till daylight.

The morning dispelled all our apprehensions, the weather had cleared up, and the coast of Asia Minor was scarcely at the distance of twenty miles before us. I easily recognised the bold and magnificent sweep of land that forms the Gulf of Keresoum, from which I had sailed just a year before.

Our crew, Turks as they were, could scarcely contain their ecstasies at the sight; and there was something, I thought, approaching to the sublime in the enthusiasm of the poor Imaum, as he hailed his beloved Anatolia—the abode of saints—nay, every stone of which he declared to be *hamazlik*, or consecrated by the prayers of the faithful, who had knelt on it. Our vessel put in to the nearest point of the coast, and I took a boat the next day to Trebisonde, where I was received at the British consulate with a kindness and hospitality which such only as have been circumstanced as I was, “after long wandering on a foreign strand,” can duly estimate. After reposing myself for a few days at Trebisonde from the fatigues of the voyage, I set out in the steamer for Constanti-

nople, where I arrived on the 30th of June, having been absent exactly thirteen months. I should not omit to mention, that the day after my departure, the Russian consul at Trebisond insisted that the vessel in which I had come should be publicly burnt in the harbour. The Pacha was *ex officio* compelled to be the instrument of this barbarous and vindictive decree, but I afterwards contrived to obtain an indemnity for the sufferers.

A P P E N D I X.

(From the Morning Post.)

Constantinople, May 28.

THE recent arrival here of several Circassians who were present and engaged in their late glorious victories enables me to furnish you with details, and to give you a more accurate idea of their extent and consequences, which affect not only Circassia and its central independence, but the whole course of Russian policy in the East. The ambitious schemes of Russia against Turkey will have to be adjourned for this year at least—for the important diversion that has taken place in its favour in the Caucasus will occupy all the force (amounting to eighty thousand men) she had collected at Sebastopol, Odessa, &c., and has already produced a decided change in the tone of her diplomacy here, being apparently ready to

acquiesce in any arrangement that will leave her at liberty to act against Circassia. It is now eight or nine years ago that Russia, exhausted by her fruitless campaigns in that country, embraced the plan submitted to the cabinet of St. Petersburg by General Williamanoff, of reducing it gradually by intersecting it with forts of military roads. These operations were commenced by the erection of the fortresses of Aboon, Nicolai, and Doba, or Alexandrinsky, connected by a military road extending for fifty miles between the Kuban and the Black Sea, and intended to isolate the north-western angle of the country—an object which (I should state by the way) they failed to effect from the first, since their garrisons, instead of interrupting the communications of the Circassians, were kept close prisoners in their respective strongholds from the time they were erected there. The next measure, whose execution has now occupied four years, and been attended with the most lavish expenditure of money and human life, was the building of forts on every accessible quarter of the coast, it having been found, especially since the affair of the Vixen, the most essential step to put a stop to all communications with the inhabitants by sea. For this purpose eight forts have been built on the coast, in addition to Anapa and

Ghelenjik, and all these forts, both in the interior and on the coast, which it had been the labour of eight years to erect, have, with one or two exceptions, been destroyed in a month. The first which was taken, the 15th of Monharem, about three months ago, and which was defended by a garrison of five hundred men, and fifteen heavy pieces of ordinance, was at Ouwyä, and not Soutchka, as at first reported; this was followed in a few days by the capture of Toaps, and a week after by that of Shapsine, which fell after an obstinate resistance, and cost the victors three hundred and fifty men. The following account of the affair was furnished me by an eyewitness :—

The Circassians, under the command of Mansour Bey, Hadji Guz-Beg, the lion of Shapsook, and Tougouse, the Wolf, had collected in the neighbourhood of the fort to the amount of 7,000 men. It is situated almost on the beach, in the centre of a valley, about a mile in width, opening gradually as it descends to the sea, and covered almost to the walls with forest and underwood. It contained, at the time it was taken, 2,500 Russians, including women and children, for it had been the intention of the government to place a colony there. The Circassians, having invested it with a cordon on

every side, advanced stealthily upon it through the wood during the night, each man having laid aside his rifle, and armed only with his sabre and cama (a broad two-edged dagger.) They had thus crept almost under the wall, and surrounded the fort, without being perceived by the sentinels, and waited there in breathless silence till the *Sabah-namaz*, (morning prayer,) that is, daybreak. The stillness was then suddenly broken by the simultaneous shout that arose on every side of "Allah! Allah!" as the Deli-Kans rushed to the assault and stormed the walls. These were carried in a few minutes, though not without severe loss, and the Russians retreated, fighting desperately, on their houses and magazines. In the midst of the bloody conflict that ensued, the powder magazines exploded; the whole of the combatants crowded in its immediate neighbourhood, the assailants and the assailed, the women and children, were all involved in carnage and destruction. The Circassians, according to their own account, lost three hundred and fifty warriors, and there perished by sword and fire at least two thousand Russians; five hundred fugitives were, in attempting to escape, made prisoners by the cordon that had been stationed about the fortress. Of still greater importance was the fort of Aboon, in the interior

of the country, containing, with the colonists included, a garrison of three thousand. The last forts captured were Nicolai and Mazgah, to which the Circassians, I am informed, sent a flag of truce, threatening them with the same fate as the others, unless they surrendered at discretion. The former, having refused to obey this summons, was taken by assault, and the garrison put to the sword; that of the latter, composed of five hundred men, laid down their arms. The whole of the places taken have, with the exception of Soobaslir, which is now garrisoned by one thousand five hundred Circassians, been razed to the ground.

The expedition which, on the receipt of this intelligence, was immediately fitted out at Sebastopol, has not been landed on any part of the coast of Circassia, but has proceeded to Georgia. It is apprehended, probably, that the revolt may spread into that province and the Cabardas.

The supreme council was yesterday engaged in deliberation about the removal from office of Khosrew Pacha, the Grand Vizier, who is accused of malversation in his office. In consideration of his length of services, and the confidence he formerly enjoyed with the Sultan, many of the council are opposed to his public disgrace and degradation.

There is a report that Mustapha Pacha,* who had been appointed vice-admiral of the fleet at Alexandria, has been poisoned there by Mehmet Ali.

As long as the Circassians cherished the least hope of assistance from England—whose diplomatic interference in their behalf they were taught to believe would suffice to expel the Russians from their territory—they deemed it superfluous to attack their fortresses. But despairing at length of foreign succour, they girded their loins, and by a simultaneous effort swept away almost every trace of them from their coast. The yoke which Russia has been so many years labouring to rivet, has been shattered to pieces in a month. As the immediate fruits of their victories, the Circassians retain upwards of two hundred pieces of ordnance, with ammunition sufficient to serve them, they declare, for ten years to come; and, what is of still greater importance, they are in high spirits;—"Tchok Kieflendik" they say, and believe themselves to be invincible. A powerful expedition, amounting to eighty thousand men, has, according to the last advices from Russia, been directed

* The Smyrna papers state that he died of the plague.

against them by the emperor, in order, as he declares, to punish them for their *atrocities*. The same insolent perversion of language was employed by Charles the Bold of Burgundy towards the heroic Swiss in the fifteenth century, and in later times by Napoleon towards the Spanish patriots ; but they were themselves severely punished for *their* atrocities, which the latter lived most bitterly to repent, confessing frequently it was the *Spanish Ulcer* that had destroyed him. The *Circassian Ulcer* seems destined to do the same for Nicholas.

THE END.

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